

# THE MODERN SCHOOLMAN

*A Quarterly Journal of Philosophy*

JANUARY 1940

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UNITY OF HUMAN SOCIETY

*John LaFarge*

INTERNATIONAL LAW

*Stephen Rueve*

RISIBILITY

*André Bremond*

M. BRUNSCHVICG

*Auguste Grégoire*

LACHELIER A REALIST

*Robert Schmidt*

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EDITORIAL

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REVIEWS

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# THE MODERN SCHOOLMAN

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# THE MODERN SCHOOLMAN

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## Editorial—Is Humanity Ultimate?

IT IS not startling that man in modern war kills with great efficiency. Science has placed in his hands very ingenious weapons. But to see man still killing man may well give pause to those who try to live as though mankind is the acme of all that exists. It is true, every decade writes a record of human foibles that should clearly disqualify Humanity as a thing worthy of worship. But how forcefully does a war argue—another great war. It calls up history—Alexander, Hannibal, the Goths, 1789, 1914—and focuses the question: if extreme man-centeredness is really plausible, should not this Humanity have the reasonableness to avoid war; ought it not have outgrown this crudity?

To speak bluntly, there are actually millions who are exalting mankind to the rank of deity—those who try to rationalize and justify their lives solely because they are “making the world a better place to live in.” Surely one would be very callous not to appreciate the real nobility, the beautiful generosity of so many who sacrifice their means and themselves to brighten the world and to advance man’s culture. But too many try to draw all their inspiration and hope, as well as the excuse for their own *carpe diem*, from capricious, lovable, yet pitiable man alone.

Humanity is preposterous as the ultimate, the Absolute; but it remains that kindness and philanthropy, deep respect for every individual are reasonable and beautiful. And it is likewise true that no mythical “Humanity” nor irresponsible state may sacrifice a single individual or degrade him to be a mere cog in an inhuman machine. The reason for both these truths is that every individual man—whether at war or not, ingenious or not, powerful or not—is a *person*, a rational being, ordained directly to God. His natural dignity, his exalted independence, are precisely his immediate relation with the true Absolute. Man is king of the universe, responsible to God as no creature below him can be; but in the actual order of beings he is not at the very apex. His dignity and inviolable rights are those of a marvelous creature, but all his worthiness is simply fiction if we try to place the ultimate reason for it in “Humanity,” as though it were its own Creator.

The serious fact of war may widen our view to a picture in which man, though very prominent, is not the all-unifying center. To cut off all the picture except man is to render him a contradiction, a creature without a Creator. And conduct of men or of nations, based upon contradictions, may well lead to chaos and frustration.

## The Idealism of Léon Brunschvicg

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Translated from the French by Alvin J. Pilié, Spring Hill College

Editor’s Note: In a previous article,\* Auguste Grégoire has shown that certain observations of M. Brunschvicg on Scholastic philosophy are based upon misunderstandings. And when the issue is clarified, “it is in the solution of the question of sufficient reason that M. Brunschvicg and the Scholastics are in radical and unambiguous opposition.” M. Brunschvicg rejects realism in any form whatsoever. To make possible a fuller understanding of the matter, P. Grégoire in the present article outlines the structure of M. Brunschvicg’s idealism, discusses it, and briefly sketches the foundations of a moderate realism. Thus this whole analysis, in the form of the idealism-realism question, offers P. Grégoire’s solution concerning sufficient reason.

### I. The Philosophy of M. Brunschvicg

THE method of Mr. Brunschvicg was pointed out in our previous article: “The philosopher has everything to gain by looking to reflection upon science for his concept of reason and intelligibility.” However, M. Brunschvicg’s idealistic stand does not seem to be really the result of such reflection; his idealism is imposed prior to any inquiry, as he writes, “[contrary to the realist illusion], the mind cannot go outside itself to attain and determine that which is absolutely foreign to it.”<sup>1</sup> “The notion of external perception is a contradiction in terms.”<sup>2</sup> “Knowl-

edge constitutes a world which for us is the world. Beyond this there is nothing,”<sup>3</sup> for such a beyond would be by definition the inaccessible, the indeterminable, and the contradictory—at the same time conceived and inconceivable. On the other hand, consciousness does exist—*cogito*—and it is absurd to seek its origin.

At no time can the question of the origin of consciousness have any meaning. It would at least have to be possible for you to represent your consciousness to yourself as one in a series of objects, and in such a way that although those objects would be apart from your consciousness, by hypothesis, you would still be in such a state as to perceive it (your consciousness) as it rises out of cosmic nature and vital impulse.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, his idealism is imposed *a priori*, so to speak. Reflective analysis will undoubtedly confirm this initial position, but it will serve chiefly to indicate precisely how thought or intellect should be conceived. Now, there are two types of idealism: “. . . one resuscitating the profound and imposing German metaphysics of the last century, the other seeking by dint of critical reflection to disengage the notion of pure subject from all represented elements.”<sup>5</sup> The first type is illusory according to M.

\*Auguste Grégoire, “Léon Brunschvicg on Scholasticism,” *The Modern Schoolman*, XVI (1938-39), 75-78 and 91.

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction à la vie de l’esprit*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> *L’idéalisme contemporain*, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> *La modalité du jugement*, p. 2. Italics added.

<sup>4</sup> “La querelle de l’athéisme,” *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie*, 1928, p. 72.

<sup>5</sup> “L’orientation du rationalisme,” *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1920, p. 263.

Brunschvicg; it is impossible,<sup>6</sup> and every attempt of philosophers to label and enumerate the categories definitively and build up a system of objects has failed and been given the lie by reality.<sup>7</sup> But "what characterizes. . . contemporary [M. Brunschvicg's own] idealism is that it . . . undertakes the unique task of knowing the mind itself. . ."<sup>8</sup> And it is by reflection that one can attain this knowledge: "by retracing the steps which have brought him [man] to understand and regulate the world through the centuries, not so much as an ephemeral individual, but in the rôle of pure consciousness, superior to time and space."<sup>9</sup>

### Science Proving Modern Idealism

There are two ways of representing the world: as science organizes it, and as "common sense" represents it. We shall here consider how M. Brunschvicg construes reflection upon the scientific view as establishing his idealism.

It is mind that discovers the defects of the *universe* and makes it possible to correct them—this "universe of the imagination . . . which is discontinuous and partial, which on account of its many lacunae and fissures leaves room for miraculous intervention."<sup>10</sup> Mind corrects, not by superimposing on the world of sense experience a world of essences and imaginery causes as realism tries to do; nor by erecting a rigid structure that conforms to some previous structural model, as an idealism like Hamelin's would have it; but mind corrects by the continuity of its own activity, which it itself reveals, as it constantly perfects its mathematical instrument and experimental technique.

Recall several of the stages in the forward march of the mind, to see how it actually proceeds: Until the twentieth century physics was dominated by the idea of continuity. But the study of radiation led to Planck's quantum theory and the modification of the older viewpoint as well as of the classical mathematics, which now became inadequate. Then with the theory of relativity even notions such as time and space had to be revised. Time and space are only relative; they come into existence only when they are measured.<sup>11</sup>

Between the formal process of measuring and the experimental objectivity of the thing measured, there is henceforth established a solidarity of order so intimate and intellectual that we cannot represent one without the other. It is impossible to separate mind and nature, the absolute of principles and the absolute of facts, the subjective and the objective.

Examples could be multiplied which show that decisive discoveries have been made diametrically opposed to the schema predetermined by the doctrine of forms and categories. Instead of applying immutable principles to new matter, progress has consisted rather in reconsidering the classic principles, in investigating the apodictic truth of them and in bringing to life unknown and unforeseen kinds of relations.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "When one assigns to the intellect the ambitious task of a constructive synthesis setting out from *alpha*, that is, from such concepts as number and time, and ending up at *omega*, the destiny of the universe and of humanity, he undertakes the work of deducing consciousness, which corresponds to some of the intermediary letters of the alphabet."—"L'intelligence est-elle capable de comprendre?" *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie*, 1921, p. 35. <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> *L'idéalisme contemporain*, p. 173.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>10</sup> "La querelle de l'athéisme," *Bul. Soc. française de Philos.*, p. 87.

<sup>11</sup> Hence the metaphysical realism of these ideal concepts must be

We may cite certain discoveries in the field of mathematics: Descartes' analytic geometry, Leibniz' and Newton's infinitesimal calculus, the non-Euclidian geometries of Lobachevski and Riemann, and Cauchy's imaginary numbers. All these are so many new ideas—veritable creations of the mind.

### Conclusions from Science

What are the conclusions concerning philosophy which M. Brunschvicg draws from this reflective analysis of the progress of science?

1. The mind is *activity*, not a substance of which thought is an attribute.

Reflective analysis makes us conscious of our mental activity, and hence allows us to conceive, in the very act of thinking, the thinking function, which defines the subject in the result of our thought that constitutes the object.<sup>13</sup>

But we must be careful not to isolate the thinking subject and accord it the transcendence of a self-subsistent being; this would be to return to the object, the matter of intuition, and to the thing-in-itself. From the idealist viewpoint the *ego* must not be considered as a reality distinct from the *cogito*. The intellect—or consciousness, which necessarily accompanies it—does not exist apart from its activity (*n'est pas une donnée en soi*). "Consciousness develops and expands with the expansion of the intellect. It becomes equal to the universe, or more exactly, it constitutes it."<sup>14</sup>

2. Intellectual activity is essentially *progressive*.

In a definite truth which has been successfully proved, there is a soul of truth (*âme de vérité*) which is superior to and disengages itself from it, which can separate itself from the particular expression of that truth and betake itself to a more comprehensive and profound expression of it. Yet this progress does not impair the eternity of truth; on the contrary, it displays the everlastingly fecund nature of it.<sup>15</sup>

Never, then, can a system be considered as definitive. "In reality, every system is a moment in the endeavor for a complete comprehension."<sup>16</sup>

3. The activity (*élan*) of the mind is *free*; it is not restricted by any external obstacle nor submissive to any internal necessity. "The mind's existence consists in developing itself in conformity with the law it has itself set down." If its activity appears as progress that is not dependent on a pre-established order of things, but is itself the creator of order, what place can *experience* have in the progress of science? First of all, experience

ought to point out the places where man should try to grasp the net of intellectual relationships. Its rôle is decisive, for by experience alone does man see what he cannot decree beforehand: whether the nail he wishes to drive into a certain place will be content to remain buried in the wood, or whether it will spring back into his hand.<sup>17</sup> The resistance of experience serves true reason by restoring liberty to it; reason is obliged to pass beyond the limits it has artificially imposed on itself, and so becomes aware of the full extent of its power.<sup>18</sup>

abandoned. Likewise disappears the no less basically metaphysical realism of abstract laws such as those of Newton and Mariotte.

<sup>12</sup> *Le progrès de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale*, p. 87.  
<sup>13</sup> "L'intelligence est-elle capable de comprendre?" *Bul. Soc. française de Philos.*, p. 46.

<sup>14</sup> "L'intelligence est-elle capable de comprendre?" *op.cit.*, p. 51. See also *La modalité du jugement*, p. 236.

<sup>15</sup> *Le progrès de la conscience*, . . . , p. 794.

<sup>16</sup> "L'orientation de rationalisme," *Rev. Métaph. et Mor.*, p. 291.

<sup>17</sup> "L'intelligence est-elle capable de comprendre?" *Bul. Soc. française de Philos.*, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

To admit this as the function of experience is by no means a reversion to dualism.<sup>19</sup>

### "Common Sense" Proving Modern Idealism

There is, besides the scientific representation of the world, the activity of the mind which gives rise to "common sense" representations. Each of us considers himself a fragment of the universe. External to us there are other things which exist by the same right that we do. But they are only appearances with which the mind can no longer be contented, now that it has become cognizant of its activity and life. The universe, as far as we are concerned, is the universe perceived. We know it only under the form of internal states, sensations, and images.

Our problem is to discover how the mind has detached from the representation of the whole that portion which we represent as the universe, and given to it the unique character of appearing to be external and independent. In knowing any object, we organize before all else the data<sup>20</sup> furnished by the sense of vision and that of touch. The constituent characteristics of the world are those which the mind supplies to it in endeavoring to unravel the two-fold chaos of primitive sensations. And these characteristics are likewise those of mental activity itself.

Now, every operation is made up of two things: analysis and synthesis. The mind, to reflect analytically on the confused and changing medley, must first be able to distinguish and isolate one element of it. And it must then keep this isolated element distinct during the course of new distinctions; it must be possible to form a series whose terms, coexisting without confusion, establish a relation of externality (*rapport d'exteriorité*).

### Space and Time Synthesis

To conceive such a relation between the terms is to transfer them to a milieu which is distinct, at least in thought, from consciousness. What are these milieus which satisfactorily answer the conditions of this abstract analysis? First, there is *tridimensional space*, the milieu of simultaneity. In every point of space, tactile and visual sensations are organized to form a stable whole, to which the sensations of sound, taste, and smell are related as well. This stable whole is an *object*. To each object is attributed a place in space; and objects linked together by their relation of situation in space form the world.

In this world, there is one object which we distinguish from all others: first, because the sensations which compose it are always presented to us as actual; then, because owing to its changes in position we can perceive other objects; finally, because we ourselves have direct power to set it in motion. This object we attribute to ourselves as our body. In relation to it the world is external.

<sup>19</sup> According to M. Brunschvicg there is still no room for considering an objective nature (*nature des choses*) which would exist apart, ever unintelligible to the mind. Experience is not the revelation of something altogether impenetrable to the mind. It is rather an invitation to shake off the dogmatic tranquillity of reason. It is the intellect's destiny to devise a more potent and subtle instrument of penetration and knowledge.

On the contrary, the one knowing has himself prepared and defined that very experience with which he comes into conflict. The instruc-

This external world is not an immutable system. Things change in position. Hence, the need of a second external milieu, which we call *time*. When the mind apprehends time and space, it has prepared the frame for the real universe. The mind must fill in this frame, organize sensations into objects with fixed places in space, and connect the changes produced in the course of time. For this work of *synthesis* the mind appeals to sensations of muscular movement. These sensations form a continuous series which is measured by the prolongation of muscular exertion. Continuity is transferred to other sensations by association, and with muscular sensations as intermediaries, more intimate relations are established between visual images and tactile impressions. The first result of this synthesis is the *apprehension of object*. The object is a whole which is not to be confused with that which we see or touch; this whole continues to exist even when its elements have all in turn been modified. A second result is the apprehension of the complexus of objects (*ensemble des objets*). As the mind assigns a definite size to each object, it likewise considers the different objects as separated a certain distance in space and forms a definite system of them.

### Conclusions from Reflective Analysis

To perceive, then is to judge . . . . The mind of its own resources affixes definite relations to the objects freely circulating within it, and these relations give intelligible organization to the sensation-content. The laws governing this organization are found to be the same in every mind, since they are bound up with the very nature of the mind. The content of the external world is individual and variable, but once organized, it has uniform and universal order.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, instead of imprisoning us in the subjective as some might have expected, mental activity guarantees the objectivity of knowledge. This objective character is accentuated with the progress of scientific thought. The theory of relativity not only permits us to distinguish between particular judgments and those bearing the seal of universal thought, but also to formulate the laws of phenomena that are independent of any system of reference.

The mind we have seen at work is, it is true, the human intellect, but it is not the individual ego of biologists or psychologists. Their ego is had because of "particularities bound up with circumstances of time and place." But prior, in a way, to such particularities, there is that radical unity which is the basis of spiritual community (*communauté spirituelle*).

If we are capable of understanding the experimental reasoning which constitutes truth, of sharing in the emotion begot of beauty, of associating ourselves with the will of justice which is morality, it is only because there rises from that very consciousness which seemed confined to our purely individual sensations and desires, an increasingly greater and more intimate participation in the progress of science, art, and morality; it is, in fine, because there is a universal principle of

tive element in it, the element that gives the reality of resistance to it, is the challenge it presents to the previously accepted theories.

<sup>20</sup> Not only is there no natural connection between the data of these two senses, but in none of the species of sensation is there any kind of exact order which serves as a basis for thought. The data furnished by the eye consist of colored blotches poorly defined in outline, which constantly impinge upon and displace one another in the visual horizon.

<sup>21</sup> *Introduction à la vie de l'esprit*, pp. 47 ff.

unity, necessarily implied if this progress is to be understood, and without it one man could not have the same idea or feeling or will as another. Without that principle we could not conceive of any link between humanity, thinking and acting, and the universe into whose laws man delves and whose free course he regulates.<sup>22</sup>

To become aware of this spiritual community is to pass from immediate consciousness to *intellectual consciousness*; to realize it in the intellectual, moral, and religious order is to become mind. But for this it is necessary to put aside the viewpoint of the individual. Then the self becomes a monad and emerges from its isolation. The monad's singularity as the center of universal perspective frees us from the opposition of the universal and the individual as well as from the alternative of external and internal world. In this conception there is no place for the miraculous, or for a transcendent cause of the universe. Idealism substitutes for the ideal of a creation such as imagination fancies in God, the reality of human creation—which is in such circumstances that it is effectively tested and verified.

## II. Criticism of M. Brunschvicg

M. Brunschvicg's philosophical position has been characterized as an "ideal positivism,"<sup>23</sup> a "spiritualism without God."<sup>24</sup> His system of thought "implies a reduction of nature to science, then a reduction of science to mind."<sup>25</sup> The exposé we have just presented shows that these remarks are just. It remains, then, to show the impossibility of the reduction of nature to science and of science to mind, and of idealistic positivism and spiritualism without God.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, *Avertissement*, p. iii.

<sup>23</sup> D. Parodi, *La philosophie contemporaine en France*, p. 430.

<sup>24</sup> R. Jolivet, *Études sur le problème de Dieu*, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> E. Gilson, "La querelle de l'athéisme," *Bul. Soc. française de Philos.*, p. 59.

Let us faithfully examine certain of the more important points of M. Brunschvicg's doctrine, avoiding disputes over terminology as much as possible.

### 1. Thought and Experience

Two factors undoubtedly enter into the make-up and progress of science: mind and nature, thought and experience. We do not think anyone will still consider science as the mere statement of that which is. The activity of the mind is an undeniable fact which has been recognized not only by M. Brunschvicg, but by all modern critics of science. Duhem among others has shown that the passage of one theory to another more comprehensive theory is not a thing of pure logic, and that the present condition of science is not the necessary *consequence* of a previous condition. The mind's activity is unpredictable, spontaneous, free—at least to a certain degree. To a certain degree, we say, because this freedom does meet with some limitations. M. Brunschvicg admits this:

Experience ought to point out the places where man should try to grasp the net of intellectual relationships. Its rôle is decisive, for by experience alone does man see what he cannot decree beforehand. . . .

#### *Limitation of Mind from Itself*

This freedom encounters limits in the mind itself, which has its own laws which it must observe when it acts. If M. Brunschvicg denies this, it is because he is unwilling to consider any but the extreme viewpoints; either absolute liberty or a rigid system of manufactured concepts. But between the two there is a middle course. The mind is subject to laws which give a certain orientation to its activity. These laws, however, are so general that they lend themselves to multifarious variations in the mind and

[Continued on page 34]

# The Philosophy of Human Unity

Ideas from the Encyclical *Summi Pontificatus*

JOHN LAFARGE

Associate Editor, AMERICA

A PAPAL Encyclical, as is obvious, is not a treatise on philosophy or scientific theology. It is a practical document, a letter, warning and exhorting. So complex, however, are the errors which have grown up in recent times, that even a practical exhortation must contain a fairly systematic discussion of doctrine. Our social aberrations, in particular, have called for a careful unraveling of the implications of sound doctrine concerning the State, the family, society, education, and kindred matters. As a result of this, the great social Encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI unfolded more than the ordinary quota of theological and ethical doctrine, in order to provide a reasoned remedy for the social disorders of the age.

The first Encyclical<sup>1</sup> of Pope Pius XII is no exception to this rule, even though it does not go into details to the extent of *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. The Holy Father expressly declares that this is not "a full statement of the doctrinal stand to be taken in face of the

errors of today." This exposition he leaves to another and more propitious time, and confines himself to "some fundamental observations." Nevertheless, the comparative novelty of the matter discussed, required some rather precise declarations, and it is the purpose of this article to note some of the philosophical implications of these declarations.

The main body of the Encyclical<sup>2</sup> deals with two errors in particular, which "render almost impossible or at least precarious and uncertain, the peaceful intercourse of peoples."<sup>3</sup>

The point of view, therefore, in the discussion is "the peaceful intercourse of peoples," the intercourse of the various "horizontal" divisions of mankind and nations—which is the problem involved by the present European war. The first of these two errors (which are *not* tagged as "isms" in the Encyclical) is Racism, "the forgetfulness

<sup>1</sup> Pius XII, *Summi Pontificatus* (Of the Supreme Pontificate), English translation: *The Unity of Human Society* (New York: America Press, 1939).

<sup>2</sup> Paragraphs 34 to 77 incl. The following references give the paragraph numbers as in the America Press edition, cited above.

<sup>3</sup> 34

of that law of human solidarity and charity which is dictated and imposed by our common origin and by the equality of rational nature in all men, to whatever people they belong,"<sup>4</sup> and by the Sacrifice of the Cross. The other is Statism or Totalitarianism, the deification of the State, which attributes to the civil authority "that absolute authority which belongs exclusively to the Supreme Maker."<sup>5</sup>

New ground is broken in the clarity with which racist doctrine is defined and condemned, the precision with which it is singled out as one of the two principal errors of the day, the grounding in philosophy and theology of the contrary teaching of human unity, the careful adjustment that is made between the essential and the accidental in the concept of race, and the application that is made of these distinctions to the matter of international relations. The matter of the State had already been thoroughly treated by Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI. But there are new angles in the *juxtaposition* of the traditional Scholastic doctrine of the State with the doctrine of the essential unity and brotherhood of all mankind. Thus the peculiar *ideology* that underlies the totalist State is combated. The ethical concept of human authority is contrasted with the mere "external" authority of the totalitarians; and this teaching is applied to the urgent problem of international relations.

The intensity and ingenuity with which the new-ideology states invade family life, both from the Racist and Statist point of view, add originality to the plea for the dignity of the individual family.

With the preceding understood, one can more readily enumerate some propositions which the Encyclical either declares or indicates, pertaining to a philosophy of human unity. They concern principally three topics: the basis of human unity; the nature of human unity; the philosophy of the state from the standpoint of human unity.

*Basis of Human Unity*

Human unity rests upon certain objective truths which concern man's nature and destiny. If we may make a natural deduction from the Pope's words, it is not a matter of mere social convention or popular sentiment. No nation, nor group within a nation, may deny this unity, either in doctrine or in practice (such as that of racial discrimination) without running counter to this objective fact. The "radical and ultimate cause" of such denials, where they occur, are attributed<sup>6</sup> to the denial and rejection of a universal norm of morality for individual social life as well as for international relations.

"We mean the disregard, so common nowadays, and the forgetfulness of the natural law itself, which has its foundation in God, . . ." These objective truths, expressed in the natural law, concerning man's nature are knowable from two sources, reason and Revelation.

Particularly memorable, for they are capable of a great wealth of illustration and doctrinal expansion, are the following points concerning the natural unity of mankind.<sup>7</sup>

Men are naturally one, because of their common origin from the first couple. Even when they were divided, God planned that they should some day be reunited.

Men share a common nature, equally composed of material body and spiritual, immortal soul. There are no supermen or "submen" by nature, no matter what they may be by circumstances. They are united by their "immediate end and mission in this world"; which means, in less abstract language, that all men must work for a living, must share in the common lot of toil, must educate themselves and their children.

All men have a common "dwelling place, the earth, of whose resources all men can by natural right avail themselves, to sustain and develop life." We all walk the same earth, eat and drink from the fruit of the same land and sea, cultivate the same ground and build upon it, wresting it to our purposes, and into the same earth we are laid when we die.

We share in the unity of the supernatural end, God, to Whom all should tend, as well as in the unity of means to secure that end.<sup>8</sup>

*What is Human Unity?*

This being the *basis* of human unity, its *nature* is summarized in one of the most pregnant paragraphs of the Encyclical,<sup>9</sup> as something quite different from the regimented international uniformity of the Socialists and the Communists or the "atomized" unity of mere aggregated individuals into which industrial Capitalism has driven the modern proletariat, destroying the social institutions which mediate between the individual and the supreme political and economic power. It is an *organic* unity.

In the light of the unity of all men, which exists in law and in fact, individuals do not feel themselves isolated units, like grains of sand, but united by the very force of their nature and by their internal destiny into an organic, harmonious relationship which varies with the changing times.<sup>10</sup>

The "force of their nature," of course, is that of their rational nature. Men are united by their reason and spirit, as well as by the circumstances of their bodily existence.

From this the Pope deduces his philosophy of international relations. The human race, as a whole, is "bound together by reciprocal ties, moral and juridical, into a great commonwealth directed to the good of all nations and ruled by special laws which protect its unity and promote its prosperity."<sup>11</sup> The law of this commonwealth is "international natural law."<sup>12</sup> Its organic parts are nations, peoples, races: the various natural but accidental separations or groupings which exist within the one great whole.

Nations, peoples, and races are not destined to "break the unity of the human race." Each is called to "enrich and embellish it by the sharing of their own peculiar gifts" and by the "reciprocal interchange of goods."

The natural fact is recognized, that individual races have certain *Anlagen*, certain "particular forces and tendencies

<sup>4</sup> 35

<sup>5</sup> 53

<sup>6</sup> 53

<sup>7</sup> 36-42

<sup>8</sup> The paragraphs (39-41), immediately following, consider the supernatural truths "which form a solid basis and the strongest possible bond of union. . . ."

<sup>9</sup> 42

<sup>10</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> 72

<sup>12</sup> 74

having their origin in the individual character of each race," and their evolution is to be sought as long as they do not destroy men's essential unity.<sup>13</sup>

This philosophy of the organic structure of "horizontal" human society, that is to say, of the various racial, national groups and peoples, parallels the concept of the organic structure of economic and "vertical" society which is chiefly the theme of *Quadragesimo Anno*. As in the latter instance organic structure was the key to the problem of economic reconciliation and industrial organization, so in the *Summi Pontificatus* organic structure, on a different plane, is the key to the question of international and inter-racial reconciliation; for it allows free play to "the legitimate and well-ordered love of our native country."<sup>14</sup> At the same time, it unites all such groups in a higher fellowship of supernatural charity recognizing man's natural unity.<sup>15</sup>

To be noted is the indication of the method by which national unity and progress are developed by the handing on from one generation to another of the nation's "treasures of art and wisdom."<sup>16</sup>

#### *The State and Human Unity*

The Pope's philosophy of the State is intimately linked with his philosophy of society as an organic whole united by interior spiritual bonds. The State is a *natural institution*, it is not a mere sad necessity arising from man's perversity and tendency to anarchy. "It is the noble prerogative and function of the State to control, aid and direct the private and individual activities of national life that they converge harmoniously towards the common good."<sup>17</sup>

One will note again that the Pope, in his explanation of the common good, does not stress man's weakness and individual insufficiency, but observes that the common good "should be defined according to the harmonious development and the natural perfection of man. *It is for this perfection that society is designed by the Creator as a means.*"<sup>18</sup> In other words, to combat the errors of today it is not enough to declare man's misery and littleness. It is necessary to restore the picture of man's true greatness, to define society and social relationships in the light of the "harmonious development" and the "natural perfection" of the individual. The danger to which our social theory is heading—as a reaction from the false optimism of eudemonistic Liberalism, from the material Utopias of Socialism and Communism—is the pessimistic denial of man's natural spiritual worth and the substitution, in order to fill the vacuum, of false national and racial gods. The Pope's calm teaching directly contradicts this tendency.

The State requires a principle of authority in order to exist. But this authority cannot be derived from mere earthly motives. It cannot be mere external authority, a regime of mere force and constraint. The penalty that human law pays for confounding mere constraint with true authority is the loss of that "moral force which is the essential condition for its acknowledgment and also for its demand of sacrifices."

The Pope's touch in this instance is most precise. He places an unerring finger on the basic weakness of a so-called authoritarian State which defeats the very purpose of authority by renouncing, through denial of the spiritual nature of man, the only true basis of authority, a free and intelligent recognition and consent.

Application is then made of the foregoing principles to four vital topics:

**Private enterprises.** These are not to be claimed and directed by the State to the detriment of the common good.

**The family,** which is the cell of human society and theatre of heroic resistance to racial and statist tyranny.

**Education,** which must "respect the sacred precinct of the family."

**International relations,** because if the State is credited with unlimited authority, not only the State itself is injured, but relations between peoples are destroyed and the "unity of supra-national society is violated."<sup>19</sup> The claim for absolute autonomy of the State "leaves the stability of international relations at the mercy of the will of rulers."

This last conclusion is specifically applied to the question of treaty observance.<sup>20</sup>

The main theme of the Encyclical is resumed in the words "Forces that are to renew the face of the earth should proceed from within, from the spirit."<sup>21</sup> The Pope's reasoning shows that the apostasy of our times is an apostasy from the spirit, consequent on an apostasy from Christ.

#### *Philosophy in the Encyclical*

While the Encyclical's doctrinal message is directed to the social and political philosopher and not to the metaphysician, the latter will readily recognize that the practical treatment of these world problems has borne distinct fruit in the metaphysical field. The study of the right ordering of the relations of social groups has caused the Holy Father to probe deep into the harmonization of the natural and the supernatural order, an ever recurrent question in the Catholic philosophy of our times. Man's nature as it comes from the hands of the Creator is here emphasized, rather than man's plight through original sin; while man's supernatural destiny is portrayed as perfecting and cherishing that natural destiny, not as ignoring and minimizing it under the plea that man is but a pilgrim here below and hence need not to care for his human institutions.

The Encyclical's doctrine lays great stress on the reality and sanctity of these natural human institutions. It shows them as founded upon an objective moral norm ascertainable through the natural certainty of reason and the supernatural certainty of faith. The State, the family, the intermediate social groups are seen in their due relationship to the very salvation of man's soul. *Summi Pontificatus* may rightly be regarded as clearing a wide path in the approach to that complete synthesis of social and religious philosophy which is a major goal of Catholic teaching in our day.

13 45

14 49

15 *Loc. cit.*

16 50

17 59

18 59

19 71

20 77

21 81

# Some Thoughts on International Law

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IN THESE DAYS of international ruffianism and precarious neutrality the question of the existence and nature of international law assumes a vital interest. From each side of the several wars now in progress there are fired charges, rebuttals, and countercharges of brutality, of violation of treaties, of unjust aggression, of disregard of international law. The allegations are retailed to the consuming public by war correspondents and expanded by our editorial writers, but there is a noticeable want of explanation concerning just what it is that is being violated, and why it should not be violated.

Now, the first question to be raised is naturally, "Is there an international law?" But this cannot be answered simply with an affirmative or a negative, for the situation is by no means simple. The question of the existence of something the nature of which is agreed upon by all, can be so answered. Is there a griffin? No. Is there a horse? Yes. To state whether there is an international law, however, involves a number of reservations and modifications which in turn involve a statement of its nature. Part of what is known as international law is really nothing more than natural law, and hence it puts a moral obligation upon the rulers of countries to do some things and avoid other things in their international relations. But as a separate body of positive human law, international law is not law in the strict sense at all; it is rather a body of customs, of which some have been agreed upon by the several countries, while others have not. Unless they have been agreed upon, they have no obligating force; but those which have been accepted do oblige the several countries, not by any intrinsic force of their own, but because the natural law obliges all—rulers as well as private citizens—to fulfill their promises. A promise, however, involving matter which is of itself indifferent, ceases to oblige either party when the other party has violated his side of the agreement.<sup>1</sup>

International law is a tree of very gradual growth dating from quite ancient times, for it early became evident to the nations that some *modus vivendi* was necessary for the satisfactory conduct of their mutual transactions. There were occasional trade parleys, which were handled by legates chosen for the particular business in hand; there were athletic contests and international festive celebrations;

there were terms to be adopted for the cessation of wars. And in all situations, whether in peace or in war, men realized that foreigners who freely put themselves into a nation's power in a friendly spirit had a right to friendly treatment, for men have always known the natural law by the light of reason. Violations there were, of course, but they were not due to ignorance of the fact that the victims had a right to immunity. In ancient times the enslavement of prisoners of war was the common practice, and its morality depended upon how the slaves were treated, and upon the question whether slavery is in itself intrinsically wrong (a debatable question). But as conditions changed, it became evident that it was preferable to have more citizens and fewer foreign slaves in the country, seeing that it could be so easily brought about by the exchange of prisoners. Moreover, since the families of both groups of prisoners desired this, there remained no reason why it should not be brought about by mutual agreement; and so this custom was gradually introduced.

In this way there grew up a body of customs regulating international relations, some of which were recognized by the rulers as obligatory under the law of God or of the gods, others of which were looked upon as merely useful. But with the increase of the world population, the improvement of means of communication, the raising of the standard of material culture with its increased needs and hence the increase of foreign commerce—with all this, there evolved a more intense international life. And so we find in 15th-century Italy the use of passports, the distinction between armed forces and civilians, and the realization that individual states prosper from the observance of law and order in the family of nations. Before long there were permanent embassies to carry on the routine affairs of international trade and diplomacy; and this too contributed its impulse to the formation of a body of rules for the conduct of nation towards nation. The rules of war were the object of considerable interest and philosophical speculation in the seventeenth century, owing perhaps to the widespread horrors of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). The revolting cruelty of this war turned men's attention to the need of formulating some rules for the protection of non-combatants, the treatment of the sick and wounded, the prevention of wanton destruction. Rulers began to

<sup>1</sup> This involved answer can perhaps be more clearly and briefly stated by use of the traditional Scholastic distinctions and subdistinctions. Hence I take the statement: "There is international law," and subject it to such treatment:  
There is international law, *distinguo*:

- in the sense of law obliging nations in their intercourse with one another, comprising part of the natural law, *concedo*;
- in the sense of law obliging nations in their intercourse with one another, comprising a separate code of human positive law, *subdistinguo*:
- law in the strict sense of the word, *nego*;
- law in the sense of a body of customs, *subdistinguo*:
  - and these customs of themselves impose obligation, *nego*;
  - and these customs impose obligation (ultimately from the natural law) if they have been freely accepted by the several countries, *subdistinguo*:
    - if the other party concerned abides by its agreement, *concedo*;
    - if the other party violates its agreement, they still oblige, *nego*.

take practical cognizance of the fact that this year's enemy will be next year's ally; and a prosperous ally is worth more than one whose land has been ruined for generations to come.

The philosophers disputed about which rules were prescribed by the natural law, and which were merely a matter of treaty; the diplomats ignored the discussions and proceeded to make such pacts as they considered practicable. All agreed that whether a particular rule was prescribed directly by the natural law, or whether it was matter of free agreement, it involved a moral obligation; for the natural law itself obliges us to keep our agreements. And so a body of rules for "civilized" warfare and for civilized peace became customary. But within the last hundred years a curious thing has happened to the whole theory of law: a godless, and hence disintegrating, philosophy of positivism has knocked the props from all law, both municipal and international. And by a peculiar twist of logic the case for law is stated thus: since the state has the might to enforce its will, municipal law is nothing more than the expression of the state's might over its own citizens; and since the body of rules known as international law is customary, it is nothing more than custom.

It is true that international law is not law in the ordinary sense of the term, as can be readily seen by a glance at any of the classic definitions of law in general. St. Thomas defines law: an ordinance of reason for the common good, promulgated by him who has care of the community. And Suarez: a common command, just and stable, and sufficiently promulgated. The other classic definitions, Blackstone's, for example, are equivalent to these. Now, there is no legislator with international jurisdiction, no international community in the formal sense, no command; the items making up the whole body of the law are customs and agreements. But, on the other hand, if it is nothing more than the customary way of acting that civilized nations follow, denunciation of any nation for departing from it is pointless: though men customarily wear their hats to work in the morning, it is pointless to denounce an individual for departing from this custom. The following words of Duffield, umpire of the German-Venezuelan Commission, will show the lamentable state into which international law has fallen as a consequence of modern secularistic philosophy:

International law is not law in its usually defined sense. It is not a rule of conduct prescribed by sovereign power. It is merely a body of rules established in custom or by treaty by which the intercourse between civilized nations is governed. . . . It therefore rests solely upon agreement. Obedience to it is voluntary only and cannot be enforced by a common sovereign power. Any nation has the power and the right to dissent from a rule or principle of international law, even though it is accepted by all the other nations. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The present state of confusion is at least in part due to a misinterpretation of the *de facto* dependence and independence existing between nations. The dependence is a fact that manifests itself in both the political and economic fields, and needs no special interpretation. But it gives rise to an anomaly when combined with the almost universal interpretation of independence, which in practice

is sovereignty. Now, when sovereignty is limited to mean the power possessed by governments of complete control within a given area, no trouble arises. But when it is interpreted to mean the power possessed by governments to control their own actions completely throughout the world, there is sure to be many a clash. And this is precisely what is done by every government, with the complete approval of all the others. For conventions and treaties of arbitration are nearly always ratified with reservations excluding questions of "national honor," "vital interests," "independence," etc. One can search the pages of history in vain for an instance in which a country in taking up arms did not appeal to such a motive; and it is officially admitted by all countries that each country is the sole judge whether such a situation exists. But let us suppose that such reservations have not been included in the ratification. Speaking in terms of modern international legal philosophy, what can we say about a country that acts contrary to its agreement? We can say that it is customary for nations to stand by their agreements, and this particular country has acted contrary to custom: that and nothing more! Of course the ordinary citizen who has not been hardened by the cynicism of diplomacy knows full well that divine natural law forbids some things and commands others, and obliges us to fulfill our agreements even concerning things that are morally indifferent. And this is where the propagandists get in their telling blows: when international outrages are committed they appeal to the universal knowledge of natural law and love of virtue. But from diplomacy's point of view, the appeal is without foundation. If you admit the existence of God, His governance of nations as well as of individuals, the natural law by which He obliges nations to respect God-given rights, you can consistently denounce the Soviet Union's recent aggression against the Baltic states. But according to diplomacy's point of view, viz. that international law is only a body of customs and non-obligating agreements, coupled with diplomacy's interpretation of sovereignty, there is nothing to denounce. For the Kremlin would readily admit that such aggression is not customary at least during the term covered by non-aggression pacts, and before the violence was committed the Kremlin (being sole interpreter of the situation) declared there was involved a matter of "vital interest" and "independence."

To conclude in brief: unless the nations practically—and not only in pious, empty phrases—acknowledge God as the Ruler of the world, there is no international law, but rather international anarchy. Through many tribulations and tears the truth is being borne in upon us, that human cupidity in rulers is a large-scale evil, while mere human desire of peace is futile. Efforts at international agreements may be praiseworthy, but they are foredoomed to failure unless those who hold in their hands the destiny of nations realize that they are under obligation of divine law, the observance of which contributes to national and international prosperity. The call, "Back to God," is not a sigh of the visionary but the call to wise statesmanship.

<sup>2</sup> *Venezuela Arbitration of 1903*, 555.

# Hints on Risibility

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WE KNOW, or we have been taught on the very threshold of our scholastic training, that *Homo est animal risibile*, but nowhere in our course of philosophy were we told the reason why. There is even a certain ambiguity in the aphorism. It is interpreted generally in the sense that man alone of all animals is gifted with the faculty of laughter. But it may mean as well (and the second meaning is a more literal interpretation) that man is the only laughable animal. Considering the question under those two aspects, let us try to find the philosophical reason for active and passive risibility in man: what relation exists between rationality and risibility, such that risibility, though not pertaining to man's essence as it is defined, flows necessarily from it.

## The Why of Laughter

For the earlier Scholastics I suppose that risibility was a convenient example of the predicable *proprium*. They declared it on the authority of Aristotle, and they did not care to inquire further. I dare say that many authors of textbooks of logic never took the trouble of consulting Aristotle for the reason of that statement. If they did, they must have been disappointed. For although one is given in the *De Partibus Animalium*,<sup>1</sup> it is merely physiological. Man alone laughs, or, more exactly, can be tickled to laughter on account of the special, thinner texture of his midriff. But why it follows that he, being rational, ought to have a more tender midriff, does not clearly appear. We, then, in our philosophical quest will leave aside Aristotle's authority and the physiological aspect of the phenomenon, and consider only the intellectual meaning and implications, if there are any, of the fact of laughter: the psychological reasons of the fact.

There are many different causes of laughing. In a general way, however, we may say that it is caused by some pleasant surprise. What kind of surprise, do you ask? The answer of Hobbes is well known. The cause of laughter, he says, is "sudden glory." Now "glory" is "joy arising from imagination of a man's own power and ability." That sudden glory or "the passion which makes those grimaces called laughter" is caused in men "by some sudden act of their own that pleases them or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves."<sup>2</sup> In other words laughter, psychologically understood, is a sudden sense of one's excellence, ordinarily awakened by the view of another's defect or deformity. "The passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminence in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmities of others or with our own formerly."

Bain expresses his sentiments on the subject with greater detail, and gives a variety of causes:

Laughter is properly an expression of joyous emotion. It is brought on in many ways: mere hilarity or animal spirits, self-complacency and a feeling of triumph, some striking effect produced by self or by others, kindly feeling [Hobbes, the pessimist, would naturally ignore that laugh of kindness], finally the so-called ludicrous which is usually the clash of dignity with meanness.

So much, in general, for the emotional origins of laughter.

Before going further it will be well to consider whether animals other than man are excluded from the privilege of laughter as it is more generally described. By how much do they fall short of that peculiar emotion, whatever its physiological expression may be? Certainly superior animals, dogs for instance, give unmistakable signs of a sudden psychological exaltation, a sense of the *joie de vivre*. Yet there is no malignity or invidious comparison with the neighbor's miserable predicament, be that neighbor another dog, or a man, or even a cat. Do dogs actually have a sense of the laughable or ludicrous?

I think that we may safely say that many animals clearly manifest the possession of a sense of fun; they take pleasure in playing a part, in merry pretense, in make-believe. But no animal, not even the dog, appears to have a sense of the ludicrous proper to *animal risibile*.

## The Ludicrous

What is this sense of the ludicrous, so characteristic of man? First it is something either in man himself or what is closely related to man's life. Man alone is ludicrous, as man alone is appreciative of the ludicrous. For that reason we must reject Schopenhauer's example of the risible: "The amusing look of the angle formed by the meeting of the tangent and the curve of a circle. . . ." The angle is not human; and Schopenhauer, who was human, could not have laughed at the geometrical oddity unless he did so sardonically, and in a moment of extreme mental depression and darkest pessimism. We shall take an example at the other extreme—the most elementary, the most clownish if you like, but so universally human, and humanly infallible.

It is the time honored joke which is recorded in Plato's *Euthydemus*: removing the chair when someone is about to sit down, and then delighting in the spectacle of his missing the accustomed support of his too-confident frame, his wildly waving hands, his falling backwards with a thud, and his subsequent sprawling on the floor.<sup>3</sup> A similar account is sure to be found some day in some as yet undiscovered fragment of the Homeric poems. It seems incredible that the joke should not have been played by some heroic wag in the Achaean army of the old tedious humbug, Nestor, king of Pylos. In the Elizabethan times, we know, it was one of the favorite and most successful tricks of the shrewd and knavish sprite called Robin Goodfellow.

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle *De Partibus Animalium* iii. 10. 673.

<sup>2</sup> Hobbes *Leviathan*, Part 1. Ch.6.

<sup>3</sup> Plato *Euthydemus* 273c.

The intentional joke is bad and blameworthy, I readily concede; but the fall itself is humanly laughable in proportion to the victim's gravity and dignity, be it natural or assumed. The simple child will laugh unconstrainedly, and children are, in this case, the best witnesses to the spontaneous promptings of human nature. You, my reader, will refrain from loud mirth—and I too will refrain, I hope—because we are well educated; but you cannot help internal laughter—if the fall is sudden and unexpected—and you will bite your lips not to betray that involuntary and pleasant feeling. Only one spectator will, without effort of inhibition, keep a becoming gravity—he who is seemingly the only wise one among the merry fools—the dog. Since he is but a dog he does not reach to the rational and properly human level of risibility. Even though he shares in the human sense of fun he does not possess the sense of the ludicrous.

Why? In a word, because ludicrousness implies the perception and appreciation of a contrast between what is in fact and what ought to be, between dignity, natural or assumed, and forced indecorum. Well did the jocose Thracian handmaid laugh at Thales who, looking at the stars, happened to fall into a well. For she could say: "That man wants to know what is going on in heaven and he does not know what is under his feet." Foolish indeed and ludicrous; though, what if the proper business of man is to inquire about the stars, to formulate the laws of the heavenly bodies? There still remains the ludicrous contrast between high ambition and miserable subjection to the laws of matter. We have now reached the dividing point between the simply ludicrous and the humorous.

According to Bergson, ludicrousness which provokes laughter in the contrast between life and some accidentally lifeless and automatic motion in man; we find mechanical stiffness or geometrical angularity where we expected, and had a right to expect, the smooth and sinuous motion of life. That at least is one, and not the least important, of the ludicrous contrasts in man or in anything that is in close relation to man and participates in his life: his clothes, headgear, or even shoes, whether boots or the more discreet, more human, sandals.

A top hat is a good example of human ludicrousness. A chimney pot on the top of a house is in no wise ridiculous. A chimney-pot hat is laughable, on account of the contrast between its rigid cylindricality and stolid immutability, and the life that is throbbing beneath it. What shelters the mysterious life of the brain and its sinuous, unforeseeable flow, ought not to be praeternaturally solemn and cylindrical. For a top hat is human only in so far as it puts one in mind of those social functions in which man manages to be just a little better than his usual self. But we must not go too far in the interpretation of the human cylinder lest it should become hateful and all the healthiness of the laugh reaction would be lost.

I only add this remark to the paragraph on hats: this or that worn out and shapeless cap, altogether devoid of dignity, is not ridiculous. It is still a symbol of life. It is human; neither is it dead, but only asleep. And there is

even a chance for the top hat in its old age when it reaches the end of a chequered and adventurous career. A battered top hat is ridiculous no more; it has acquired a sort of mournful dignity. *Sunt lacrimae rerum!*

Laughing, then, is human, and laughableness too is properly human, because man alone of all animals has an essential dignity of nature, and alone can affect a spurious dignity of office and circumstance. But ludicrousness has been shown (it could be more fully shown) to arise from a contrast between man's dignity, essential or accidental (high office and habit, gravity of mien and deportment), and some instance in him of deficiency, meanness, or helplessness. It must be noted that even accidental and usurped dignity has its source in man's essential rationality. And it is only man who can detect that contrast and be rationally moved by it to laughter.

Let us go a step further and ask ourselves if such contrast is not only possible but essential; so that man considered in himself—apart from any accidental circumstance, such as falling into a well while looking up to the stars, or sneezing in the middle of an eloquent period, etc.—if man, taken simply in his own nature is ludicrous precisely because of an essential contrast and disproportion. I think that he is, yet such disproportion can be observed only by the mature and reflexive mind. Once the contrast is observed, it will excite genuine laughter, a gentle and kindly, not boisterous, laughter in the Christian or Christian-minded spectator. But here we pass from the sense of the ludicrous to the sense of humor, which, as I shall try to show, is Christian and bound up with Christian humility.

### *The Sense of Humor*

Plato had in a high degree the sense of the ludicrous. Had he a sense of humor? I doubt it, though he was not lacking a humility which was philosophical, even religious, in tone; but because it fell short of Christian faith and hope, it was sad, not joyful. Not only has he a keen sense of the ludicrous, but he possesses in a high degree the gift of comic dramatist. As a moralist, on the other hand, he does not approve of laughter. Loud laughter, such as the unquenchable laughter of the gods in the *Iliad*, is unworthy of those creatures and of all godlike men. But for Plato, even the mirth we derive from the wittiest comedy is at bottom invidious and malign. There is *φθόνος* (envy) in it. The joy we feel at our neighbor's faults cannot but be malign.<sup>4</sup> So he lets us understand it in the *Philebus*. But what if in our neighbor's faults we recognize our own and laugh at the infirmities inherent in human nature? Plato's answer is that human infirmity should rather be a cause of sadness.

No other philosopher, I think, conceived and maintained in his heart a loftier intellectual ambition, and none, at least of the pre-Christian thinkers, was less intellectually proud than Plato. "What are we?" he asks in the *laws*, "things of hardly any truth and value, playthings of the gods." "How thoroughly, O stranger," his Spartan guest exclaims, "thou dost vilify the nature of man." "Excuse

<sup>4</sup> Plato *Philebus* 48c.

me," answers the Athenian host (that is Plato himself), "but thou must not wonder if, looking up to the god and then down at our pitiable state, I have spoken so disparagingly of human nature. Still, if it please thee, let us suppose it is not altogether miserable."<sup>5</sup>

Such was Plato's humility; and it was sad, not humorous. Here is the reason why. Humor, as I understand it, implies two things: sympathy with other people's infirmity, and that Plato could have; and mirth at the thought of that infirmity which is ours as well. To these marks of humor George Meredith gives his affirmation in describing his ideas on the subject.

If you laugh all round him [the ridiculous person], tumble him, roll him about, deal him a smack [you need not be so boisterously humorous], and drop a tear on him, own his likeness to you and yours to your neighbor; and it is the spirit of humor that is moving you.

And the author of the article on Humor in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* adds to that quotation from Meredith's Essay on Comedy:

What distinguishes humor from pure wit and the harder forms of jocularly is the sympathy, the appreciation, the love which includes the follies of Don Quixote, the prosaic absurdities of Sancho Panza, the oddities of Bradwardine, Dr. Primrose, etc. in an embrace of contrasts beyond the scope of the comic poets.

Sympathy, then, appreciation, love, sense of human fellowship, all these are characteristics of humor. But why should our laugh be good-natured, and not tinged with bitterness and sarcasm? Why do we not experience sadness at the spectacle of our common frailty rather than mirth? That would be more proper to our sense of fellow-

ship; yet the object of humorous laughter is still the same contrast between human greatness, loftiness of ideal and purpose, and any manifestation of weakness (especially of the body) or of dependence on the laws of inanimate nature.

*Os homini sublime dedit, coelumque tueri  
Jussit. . .*<sup>6</sup>

and lo! here he is sprawling on the ground, then perhaps standing up again, doing his poor best to look unconcerned and keep the *os sublime*. I understand the sudden joy as long as I feel superior to the disgrace. But the disgrace is mine and I know it. Why laugh at the ludicrous contrast?

I answer: because the contrast is divine, of divine creation and, as a Christian, I add confidently, of divine love. A contrast indeed between greatness and congenial littleness; but the greatness is genuine, much more sublime than I dare to imagine; divine in fact, and therefore more real than the littleness. How sad, how tragic the *os sublime* if it were merely human! But though I happen to slip and fall to the ground, I am still a child of God and no human ambition is high enough for me. I can afford to laugh at my infirmity, at our infirmity, at the infirmity of a child of God, my brother. And that is the reason why the greatest humorists are the Saints.

<sup>5</sup> Plato *Laws*, Bk.VII, 804b

<sup>6</sup> Ovid *Metamorphoses*, Bk.I, 11.85-86. (He gave to man a countenance turned upward, and bade him contemplate the heavens.)

## The Realism of Jules Lachelier

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IN MODERN French philosophy a place of honor and importance is reserved to Jules Lachelier, for he and his contemporary, Ravaisson, were principally responsible for the rise of French idealism.

Though Lachelier's written works are neither many nor voluminous, yet, by reason of his personal qualities and his position as professor at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*, where he helped in the formation of France's teachers, his influence upon his contemporaries and later philosophers was great. Before his time empirical materialism and subjectivism were the philosophical vogue. The eclectic philosophy of Cousin, then being taught at the *Ecole Normale*, Lachelier judged to be an inadequate defense of spiritualism. As a consequence, he built up from a Kantian starting point a philosophy which he was convinced would defend the superiority of the spirit against the positivists and sensationists.

This philosophy presents difficulties for those who are accustomed to the fundamentally realistic viewpoint and vocabulary of the Schoolmen. Because of his Kantian critical approach, Lachelier does not speak of *things-in-*

*themselves*, but of *our perception* of them. The thing as it exists *for us* is his concern, even when he passes on to discuss its objectivity.

### *Spiritualistic Realism*

Hence it is that Lachelier seems to be and is usually considered an idealist. And indeed, much of his language would seem to indicate that he admitted no reality outside the mind. According to him we attain by our senses only phenomena which, as phenomena, constitute neither a unity nor a relationship. We construct for them an order and a unity by thought. The work of the mind gives the external world its objectivity and its existence. "The existence of things," he says, "consists in being thought";<sup>1</sup> and again, "there is no existence for us without the action of a thought which knows and affirms it."<sup>2</sup> In his *Course of Logic*<sup>3</sup> of the year 1866-1867 he identifies himself with the idealists.

But Lachelier is at bottom more of a realist than these words give reason to believe. He does not deny the existence of the external world. Rather he affirms it almost everywhere. His philosophy is, in his own words,<sup>4</sup>

Paris:Alcan,1916) p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Given at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*; unpublished.

<sup>4</sup> *Du Fondement de l'Induction*, p. 102. This work (first published in 1871) is posterior to the *Course of Logic* in which he places himself among the idealists.

<sup>1</sup> *Course of Psychology* (given at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* in 1875; unpublished; after the manuscript of G. Séailles), lesson 1 "Object of Course", p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychologie et Métaphysique* (an article published for the first time in 1885; reedited with *Du Fondement de l'Induction*, 7th ed.;

a "spiritualistic realism." Although he adopts for the most part the philosophy of Kant—which, incidentally, he calls "objective idealism"—he insists upon the objectivity of the external world. Not satisfied with *supposing* that objectivity or with accepting it as an unprovable datum of consciousness after the manner of the "dogmatic" realists, he wants to *prove* it. This is the express aim of *Psychologie et Métaphysique*, the undercurrent throughout *Du Fondement de l'Induction*, and his anxious concern whenever his courses of psychology and logic deal with scepticism and empiricism.

Objectivity, he says, is not established by sensation. We do not distinguish the reality and existence of things by the mere senses, since illusions and hallucinations are found there as well as the representation of the real. Experimental psychology gives us certain criteria according to which we distinguish between real and imagined perception. These criteria are intellectual. It is therefore by the mind that we judge of the reality of things, and it is in thought that we find their objectivity. For in distinguishing things from ourselves the intellect makes things *objects*.

In view of this, Lachelier's statement that "the existence of things consists in being thought" bears re-examination. In the similar statement quoted above, the words "for us" throw light upon this: "There is no existence *for us* without the action of a thought." Having adopted a critical starting point, he is speaking of *our knowledge* of the existence of things and of *our concept* of existence. "Thinking," he says, "is, therefore, adding to the representation of the world the conception of real existence and consequently that of our own existence."<sup>5</sup> Even in his *Course of Logic*, where he seems more idealistic than in his later works, we find the very emphatic assertion that the existence of the external world is independent of *our* mind and of our individual existence. It rests upon Mind or The Spirit (with a capital letter)<sup>6</sup>—a statement which we have little difficulty in admitting. "We cannot seriously doubt," he says again, "that sensible things exist in themselves and continue to exist after we have ceased to sense them."<sup>7</sup> "An act of cognition can be exercised only upon a truth. We are therefore led . . . to affirm both the existence of the mind, and of a truth external to it and independent of it."<sup>8</sup>

#### *Objective Unity of Phenomena*

We judge of the existence and reality of things according to the connection between the phenomena which we perceive in sensation. The *necessary* unity of the phenomena is established for us by thought, but there is already in the phenomena a connection, an elementary unity, a unity of juxtaposition and of succession, which is independent of our thought and cannot be disrupted by it.<sup>9</sup>

When we perceive a phenomenon, we immediately place it in time and space. It is not already there because, for

Lachelier, time and space are mental forms, or more exactly, "forms of sensibility." If Lachelier is something of an idealist, it is because of an error in regard to the nature of time and space, which prevents him from seeing them fundamentally contained in reality. He confuses *divisibility* with *actual division*. Then he argues that space is necessarily divisible *ad infinitum*; that nothing which is infinitely *divided* can exist in reality; and consequently that space can only be in our perception.<sup>10</sup> No argumentation is found in his works to prove that time is a form of sensibility, but the argument he applies to space would apply *a fortiori* to time.

Space and time taken in themselves do not constitute a unity; "they are, on the contrary, an absolute diversity." Nevertheless, we place the phenomena there in an order of juxtaposition and succession which is independent of our sensation and of our thought, so much so that we cannot change their situation by thought. That elementary unity, then, "can rest . . . only on the internal bond of the phenomena."<sup>11</sup>

#### *Relation of Thought to the External World*

There enters here the great Kantian hypothesis, which seems to be the weak link in his system. It is proposed as a solution to a problem which is a thorny one for every realist: viz., the necessity of the relationship between thought and exterior things. Thought does not exist without an object. What thought needs in order to explain its own characteristics must exist in its object. But thought is a unity made from a multiplicity and a permanence made from a continual succession. The unity which we perceive by the senses is only a *de facto* unity. In order that we may think the phenomena, there must be a *necessary* connection and unity. We think of them as bound together and as necessarily dependent upon each other. Thus we refer them to the form of efficient causes. Lachelier writes:

It is because all simultaneous phenomena are, as Kant says, in a universal reciprocal action that they constitute a single state of things and are on our part the object of a single thought; and it is because each one of these states is, in a way, only a new form of the preceding one that we can consider them as the successive epochs of a single history which is at the same time that of thought and that of the universe. All phenomena are therefore subject to the law of efficient causes because that law is the only foundation that we can assign to the unity of the universe; and that unity is in turn the supreme condition of the possibility of thought.<sup>12</sup>

The efficient cause, according to Lachelier, makes the phenomena objective—or, let us rather say, accounts for the objectivity of the phenomena. To exist means to occupy a determined place in time and space.<sup>13</sup> But efficient causes determine. We thus conceive a necessity and a connection which is independent of our thought and which must exist outside of our thought. In this way he proves the existence of the external world—a fact which ordinarily is supposed but left without defense before the scepticism of subjective idealism.

<sup>5</sup> *Fond. de l'Ind.*, pp. 46 & 51; *Course of Psy.*, les. 24 "Pure Mind," p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> *Course of Psychology*, lesson 11, "Thought", p. 68.

<sup>7</sup> *Course of Logic*, lesson 17, "Idealism," pp. 160-161.

<sup>8</sup> *Du Fondement de l'Induction*, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> *Psychologie et Métaphysique*, p. 166.

<sup>10</sup> *Psy. et Mét.*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>11</sup> *Fond. de l'Ind.*, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>13</sup> *Course of Psy.*, les. 11, "Thought," p. 69.

The determination of each phenomenon is a necessity from which the phenomena cannot escape. Lachelier often uses this word "necessity" to denote the absolute determination of things, in contrast to "liberty." He also calls it a "mechanism" because the connection of phenomena is rigorous and necessary, and therefore mechanical. This same connection, to his mind, constitutes "the laws of nature."<sup>14</sup> These laws, inasmuch as they are mechanical, are also mathematical laws. This does not mean, however, that we grasp them perfectly enough to reduce them to mathematical formulae. They will always more or less elude our limited intelligence.<sup>15</sup>

Because causality and the laws of nature are thus considered equivalent, Lachelier uses the term "nature" itself to designate nature's mechanical aspect. Causality seems to be the same thing for Lachelier as matter<sup>16</sup> and the principle of multiplicity. "The mechanism of nature," he says, "fills by a continuous evolution the infinite of time and space."<sup>17</sup>

Mechanism, however, is not pure multiplicity like extension. It implies a certain unity of succession or of series. But even this unity does not entirely explain the unity of thought. For thought to be *one*—for thought to be at all—the phenomena must be linked by a more perfect unity; the unity of thought demands a unity of *system* in the phenomena—a unity which can account not only for the succession of each phenomenon, but also for the organization of many phenomena among themselves. But this organization—this complex phenomenon in which a number of other simple phenomena participate—is a goal or an end. For, according to Kant, an end is a whole for which its parts exist.<sup>18</sup> The resulting unity of system is the law of final causes.

#### *Finality the Principle of Unity*

When we ask the reason for something or pronounce the word "Why?", our question can have two meanings: (1) "Why does the thing exist?" and (2) "With what in view?"—"Whence does it come and to what is it tending?"<sup>19</sup> Efficient causes answer to the first question; to the second, final causes.

It must not be supposed, says Lachelier, that these two causes are absolutely distinct and unrelated. They are only two aspects or two sides, so to speak, of the same reality. Every mechanical law of nature has an intentional character:

If we ask ourselves why a physical law exists, we must look first of all on the purely mechanical side. Then we must judge that that law makes possible other laws and the existence of beings to whom laws apply. The law in question has, therefore, an intentional character and exists in view of the good.<sup>20</sup>

The existence of final causes is the only guarantee we have of the maintenance of the present order of nature, of the permanence of the living species, and even of the conservation of brute bodies.<sup>21</sup>

If causality is, in a way, the principle of multiplicity, finality is much more clearly the principle of unity in things: it is their internal unity.<sup>22</sup>

The true reasons for things are ends, which, under the name of forms, constitute the things themselves; matter and the causes are only a necessary hypothesis, or rather an indispensable symbol, by which we project into time and space what is in itself superior to either.<sup>23</sup>

To finality, the principle of the internal unity and intelligibility of things, Lachelier ascribes the "noumenon" or "being in itself."<sup>24</sup> But that unity or form or noumenon is not an abstraction; it is rather the concrete, existent being. The law of final causes makes things pass (in our minds, that is to say) from an abstract existence, which they have in virtue of causality, to a real existence. From this we have the objectivity of the material world proved again and more completely by finality.<sup>25</sup>

The two kinds of causes, efficient and final, are the constituent principles of material beings. Through an analysis of these two ideas, Lachelier leads us *a priori* to a knowledge of the nature of phenomena and of matter. The causes reconcile contraries: they explain the unity of thought in the diversity of phenomena, the intensity of qualities perceived in extension. The law of efficient causes, as we have seen, gives us a sort of unity: a unity of series, the necessary succession of phenomena, or the linking of causes and effects. But in what does this unity consist? The phenomena take place in time and space; their diversity occurs there. But a diversity in time and space which exhibits a unity, the unity of continuous connection, is nothing but motion.<sup>26</sup> "All phenomena," he says, "are therefore movements, or rather a single movement which continues as much as possible in the same direction and at the same speed, whatever may be the laws according to which it is transformed."<sup>27</sup>

Matter, then, according to Lachelier, is motion. Even atoms and the component parts of atoms are systems of motion. One might ask what it is that moves, whether there is any subject of the motion. Lachelier gives us no answer; but he lets us believe by his silence that there is no *mobile* (movable thing); there is just pure motion.

If the causality of phenomena is motion, what is the finality which determines them and is their internal reason? It is evidently force:

Every phenomenon or—what comes to the same thing—every movement is therefore the product of a spontaneity which tends towards an end. But a spontaneity which tends towards an end is a tendency, and a tendency which produces a movement is a force. Every phenomenon is therefore the development and the manifestation of a force.<sup>28</sup>

Causality is the production of motion; "the determination of this motion to a definite direction and a definite speed" is finality.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Finality the Principle of Liberty*

Even though Lachelier gives a dynamistic explanation of nature, he is not, on that account, a materialist. The

<sup>14</sup> *Fond. de l'Ind.*, p. 70.

<sup>15</sup> *Course of Log.*, les. 17, "Scepticism," p. 150; *Course of Psy.*, les. 24, "Science," p. 151.

<sup>16</sup> *Fond. de l'Ind.*, p. 85, where he contrasts "matter and causes" with "ends, under the name of forms."

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 76-79, 70, 12.

<sup>19</sup> *Course of Psy.*, les. 19, "Reason," p. 115

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>21</sup> *Fond. de l'Ind.*, p. 70.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82; *Psy. et Mét.*, p. 164.

<sup>25</sup> *Fond. de l'Ind.*, pp. 80-81; *Psy. et Mét.*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>26</sup> *Fond. de l'Ind.*, pp. 55 & 91; *Course of Psy.*, les. 24, "Science," p. 151.

<sup>27</sup> *Fond. de l'Ind.*, pp. 55-56.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

composition of movements and forces does not exclude the spontaneity of life, nor even its liberty.

If force is only the tendency of motion toward an end, it can be admitted without contradiction that there are in the universe as many forces as movements, and that a number of movements which tend toward a single end are the expression of a single force. . . . There is only one force where there is only one system and one idea of nature.<sup>30</sup>

Force, then, is the unity, the organization, the idea of the thing; in a word, it is finality. Finality is synonymous with tendency or desire; it is the expression of a will: "the will to live."<sup>31</sup> Finality implies and even requires liberty.

Liberty seems to consist, indeed, in the power of varying one's plans and of conceiving new ideas; and the law of final causes absolutely requires that there exist such a liberty since the systematic unity of nature could not be realized except by a series of original inventions and of creations strictly so-called.<sup>32</sup>

Liberty, according to Lachelier, is the highest expression of being and thought.<sup>33</sup> All beings, even the most imperfect, share in thought.

The lower forms of being participate in intelligence. A tree realizes a Platonic idea or divine type if it is alive. It has a dull consciousness of its existence and is, although in a very small degree, capable of happiness. Therefore it is, to a certain extent, intelligible and intelligent.<sup>34</sup>

That participation of all beings in intelligence—or at least the way in which Lachelier speaks—might put one in mind of pantheism. But that participation is susceptible, to some degree, of a more favorable interpretation: all beings are manifestations of an intelligence and the incorporation of an idea, without, however, actually being intelligences themselves.

The degree in which beings participate in thought and liberty is, of course, proportional to their perfection. Lachelier draws up a gradation of beings in which the lowest degree is mechanism and the topmost is liberty. We find there in ascending order: inorganic being, vegetable life, sensitive life in the animal and in man, and—exclusively in man, this time—the intermediate life or "life

of interest," and finally the higher or moral life.<sup>35</sup> Even in the activity of man are to be found all the degrees from liberty down to necessity:

That duality of spiritual and material activity is not absolute heterogeneity; it is one and the same activity which in an incomprehensible way descends from liberty to necessity—two very different forms if the extremities are considered, but almost identical if you consider the degrees next to each other.<sup>36</sup>

Sensible being is thus conceived as constituting a continuous gradation from determinism to liberty, differentiated in its various degrees by different proportions of these two qualities—much as Aristotle compounds it of act and potency.<sup>37</sup>

### Conclusion

At the end of his book *Du Fondement de l'Induction*, M. Lachelier sums up his position thus: "The true philosophy is . . . a spiritualistic realism in the eyes of which every being is a force and every force a thought which tends toward a more and more complete consciousness of itself."<sup>38</sup>

A follower of the Schools will find in Lachelier's philosophy regarding the external world many points with which he can agree and many with which he will heartily disagree. But it should be clear that, in spite of his critical point of view and the idealistic language that he uses, Lachelier is at bottom a realist, firmly believing in the objectivity of the external world. Furthermore, he wants to prove it. To do so he shows that thought requires that the phenomena on which thought is based be connected by efficient causes and organized and directed by final causes which evidence a directing thought. Causality is expressed through motion; finality, through force. The more perfect the unity of force in beings, the greater is the presence of finality, liberty, and thought. Such a philosophy is not a subjective or immaterial idealism, as some would have it, but—to take Lachelier's own expression—a "spiritualistic realism."

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93; p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> *Psy. et Mét.*, p. 162.

<sup>32</sup> *Fond. de l'Ind.*, p. 97.

<sup>33</sup> *Psy. et Mét.*, entire part IV, especially pp. 164-165 & 170.

<sup>34</sup> *Course of Psy.*, les. 21, "Sympathy," p. 129.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, les. 27, "Liberty," p. 174; see also les. 21, "Sympathy," p. 131.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, les. 30, "Refutation of Materialism," p. 199.

<sup>37</sup> For a good summary of Lachelier's thought on the nature and grades of sensible being consult his *Course of Psy.*, les. 25, pp. 161-163. The passage is unfortunately too long to reproduce here.

<sup>38</sup> Page 102.

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can be adapted to the diverse conditions of data. The doctrine of a *priori* forms and categories does not necessarily exclude intellectual spontaneity. In fact M. Brunschvicg himself demonstrates that space, the "medium of the external world," although a condition necessary for the exercise of thought, does not prohibit a variety of measures of space, and hence allows for differing geometries.

The conclusion supposedly drawn from reflection on science, namely, that the activity of the mind is subject to no internal necessity, seem, then, to surpass the premises.

Again, we are told that mental activity is indefinitely progressive. Progress in knowledge is indeed understandable if there are data distinct from thought. If we do not possess intellectual intuition of these data from the beginning, it is possible for us to come to know them more completely and more perfectly. And we willingly admit that if we had such intuition, it would perhaps be difficult

to become conscious of the fact that we are really making progress. Does not such consciousness suppose that we had a certain prior knowledge of the ideal to be realized—which would practically do away with progress? Further, in order that we may recognize progress our intellect must possess an ideal of intelligibility and have definite orientation. Unless this is present a *priori*, we fail to see how authentic progress can be distinguished from pure change.

Consequently, when M. Brunschvicg affirms that mental activity is progressive and that we are conscious of this progress, he implicitly acknowledges that the freedom of the mind is not absolute, but internally restricted.

### Limitation of Mind by Experience

The second factor that enters into the make-up of science is experience. That experience imposes certain restrictions on the freedom of the mind, and hence that there exists a certain opposition between thought and experi-

ence, cannot be easily denied. M. Brunschvicg, however, does not see reason here for resorting to realism. He refuses to hypostatize what is back of that shock which is received when the mind is brought to grips with experience. A few simple illustrations will help us to understand his attitude. In arithmetic, operations with real numbers (*nombres naturels*) have been defined. Addition and multiplication are always possible; subtraction and division are not. It is this impossibility which acts as a shock to the mind, and forces it to invent new kinds of numbers which always allow the application of all four operations. In like manner, it is the impossibility of demonstrating Euclid's postulate which gives rise to non-Euclidian geometries.

But can we altogether compare physical experience with this type of mathematical experience? The latter takes place altogether in the mind. From the idealist's perspective the same must be said of physical experience. The knowing subject has defined and prepared experience, says M. Brunschvicg. Up to this point, then, both types of experience can undoubtedly be compared, but at this stage physical experience does not yet convey knowledge. If a present experience so deviates from previous theories that it will have the reality of a resistance, then experience must be realized, and comparisons can be made. There is an element in physical experience, therefore, that is wanting in mathematical experience as we have considered it. Mathematical experience must, if it is to be on an equal footing with physical, quit the realm of pure mathematics. It must effectively measure, for example, the angles of a *given* triangle.

We grant that the formal process of measuring cannot be defined once and for all, independently of the concrete circumstances in which the observer is placed and of the things to be measured; and we admit that the result of the measuring is essentially related to these two terms; still the duality of it exists nonetheless in the very nature of science itself. It is, moreover, a condition of its progress. Consequently, we must conclude that it is not science as such that permits us to decide in favor of idealism or realism. Idealism is correct when it affirms that science supposes intellectual activity; but that dependence upon intellect hardly suffices to do away with every form of realism. We admit that organization of sense experience is the work of the intellect; but certainly there must be something to be organized. The "form" of science must be distinguished from its "matter."

## 2. The World of "Common Sense"

The proximate matter of scientific knowledge is the *world of common sense*, the world of objects ordered in space and time. We shall not tarry to discuss M. Brunschvicg's deduction of the forms of space and time. In essentials we agree with him. But even in the unscientific

representation of the world, we must again distinguish between the matter and the form, between that which is organized and the organization itself. This organization is the work of the mind in the unscientific just as in the scientific representation. The only difference is that the intellectual activity in science is reflex, while in the ordinary reproduction it is not, (the mind acting in the latter *per modum naturae*, as the Schoolmen say). This activity is exercised on subjective, variable sensations, which are pure data, the prime matter of cognition. Hence the question of realism and idealism inevitably arises. But for M. Brunschvicg it does not rise at all, since for him it is already unquestionably solved. The thing-in-itself being impossible, it follows that the matter as well as the form derives from the mind. Of course, the inherent value of such a solution depends on that of the arguments adduced in behalf of integral idealism. Hence we must inquire into these.

## 3. Proofs for Idealism

All the proofs for idealism can be definitively traced back to two principles: the primacy of thought and the impossibility of the thing-in-itself.

### *The Primacy of Thought*

"The question of the origin of consciousness," we are informed, "can never have any meaning." This is true, of course, of consciousness or thought in general. As M. Parodi remarks: "Not even the faintest spark of consciousness or intellect . . . can . . . spring from rigid, lifeless mechanism."<sup>26</sup> But what kind of thought are we considering here? Idealists themselves differentiate Thought and individual thought. Although they hold that the former is immanent in the latter, still they cannot completely identify the two. For there can be and in fact there is opposition between them.

Is it so evident, then, that the question of *individual* consciousness is meaningless? To be sure, there is no question of "perceiving it at its sources, springing from cosmic nature and vital impulse." But is there only one way of attaining truth, and that by a simple, immediate verification? If this be so, idealists should cease speaking of universal thought, since only individual thought, my thought, is the object of immediate consciousness.<sup>27</sup> As a matter of fact, we affirm the existence of a fundamental unity, the basis of spiritual community, in addition to particularities to which the individual ego is due, precisely because there are marks that manifest the activity of individual thought. Why, then, should it be taboo to speak of the origin of *my* consciousness—if it presents certain signs of contingency?<sup>28</sup> We shall see presently that there are actual signs of contingency.

Just now, what are the facts that prove the basic unity of every individual thought?

<sup>26</sup> D. Parodi, "Le rationalisme et l'idée de Dieu," *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1930, p. 34.

<sup>27</sup> As M. Maugé has put it, the hypothesis of cosmic consciousness goes far beyond the potentialities of a simple *cogito*; such a concept might be found at the summit of knowledge, but not at its base.

<sup>28</sup> From the philosophical point of view, it is not the origin of individual consciousness that is, properly speaking, in question: it is its contingency. Of course, for M. Brunschvicg both these questions are

the same; for, according to him, I cannot know that anything is contingent unless I know it has begun to exist. For the Scholastic, contingency means nothing more than the distinction between a principle and that which proceeds from it (transcendence), and at the same time the dependence of an effect upon its principle (immanence). Even if my consciousness had always existed, that would not prove it is not contingent.

We are capable of understanding the experimental reasoning that constitutes truth, of sharing in the emotion begotten of beauty, of associating ourselves with the will of justice which is morality.

And if a universal principle of unity did not exist,

one man could not have the same idea or feeling or will as another, and we could not conceive of any bond between humanity, which thinks and acts, and the universe into whose laws man delves and whose free course he regulates.<sup>29</sup>

These facts prove beyond doubt that thought is somehow one though in different individuals. But is this oneness identity or only similarity? This is a question which the facts appealed to cannot answer by themselves. If the oneness is similarity, then individual minds are participations of one and the same transcendent intellect which is also the principle of the universe. This would explain how intellects can be similar and at the same time would allow for connection between man and the universe. But more than these considerations will be required to transform this realist hypothesis into a thesis. For the present it is sufficient to note that it explains the facts cited above equally as well as the "identity" hypothesis. Besides, the notion of participation involved is hardly more obscure than the idealists' relation between individual and universal thought. And it does have this advantage: it offers some explanation for the plurality of individual egos. As M. Cresson has remarked, there are few men who will consent to being nothing more than systematized judgments in the consciousness of M. Brunschvicg.

#### *Impossibility of the Thing-in-Itself*

But what of the proof for idealism, that anything beyond cognition (any thing-in-itself) is impossible? If by thing-in-itself is meant that which neither is known nor can be known by any mind, and which has no connection with thought, evidently we must disagree. For everything that exists in any degree whatsoever is known at least to subsistent thought, the universal principle whence all things derive. However it would indeed be contradictory for me to affirm the existence of something as totally beyond the grasp of my intellect, and absolutely foreign to it. For if I affirm its existence, it would be the object of my intellect and actually known to me.

Hence it is true that "there is nothing beyond *what I am able to know*." But does this mean that there is nothing beyond *what I actually know*? that a thing cannot exist independently of the knowledge I actually possess of it? that it cannot exist for its own sake or for someone else before it exists for me? This is what the idealists suppose without ever proving.

But then: the mind must come out of itself to attain and determine what is absolutely foreign to it? No, the mind has no such need. This objection arises from conceiving all distinctions as existing externally in space. Cognition is not transient action: the subject knows the object only in so far as it *is* or *becomes* that object.

Still, M. Brunschvicg is right. "The notion of external perception is a contradiction in terms." If by perception we understand the act of perception, it is manifest that it cannot be external to the subject. But the form of the

object that the knowing subject possesses is not indeed *that which* is known (*id quod*); it is *that by which* the subject knows the object (*id quo et in quo*).

Evidently all this supposes a theory of cognition in opposition to M. Brunschvicg's; and it will not be understood unless we take into account that space is transcended in the relation between subject and object. Let us, then, consider methodically this opposing system.

#### *III. Realism as a Positive System*

That which exists first and foremost is Thought; not impersonal, but subsistent Thought. From this all things derive—individual thoughts and nature itself. Nature is thus intelligible not only in itself and in relation to the creative Intellect, but also in relation to our intellect. (This, of course, does not mean that we actually know all things.) In actual cognition, the subject knowing somehow becomes the object. The primary contact occurs in the physical plane: the subject is acted upon by the object and is modified by it. Such is the origin of sensation, the matter of cognition, which the intellect in turn organizes and renders intelligible. Since the finite intellect is a participation of the creative Intellect, it cannot be totally deprived of priority with regard to its objects. The form of the object known is wrought in the subject; the spontaneous and scientific organization of the world is the work of the intellect.

Up to this point, this solution at least takes into account all the facts "explained" by idealism. But the two systems are not equally plausible. We have the advantage, stressed before, that we explain the plurality of individual consciousnesses. And the possibility and need of progress in our knowledge of the world is more understandable. We first come to know by the interaction of subject and object, and our knowledge is therefore essentially relative. Hence it is understandable that the world thus *given* is not perfectly intelligible. But if the matter of cognition is but the product of thought, how is it explained that the matter is not intelligible from the very beginning and that it can be to a certain extent foreign to the intellect?

However, these are but subsidiary considerations. We believe that realism can and should be established more rigorously. Here we can do little more than indicate the general outline of the analysis.<sup>30</sup>

#### *The Existential Judgment*

It is the *object* of cognition that is truly the focus of intellectual life. It is the terminus of spontaneous and unreflective activity of the mind, and the starting-point of scientific, reflex activity. And it will be our starting-point also. Since objective knowledge is beyond all dispute, the conditions of that knowledge must likewise be accepted. That act of the mind which constitutes the experience-datum as its object is the judgment, the affirmation: "that exists." In fact, to know anything whatsoever as an *object* is to consider it as "something,"—and this comes to the same thing as stating the fundamental judgment: "that exists."

<sup>29</sup> See the quotation from M. Brunschvicg, page 23, above.

<sup>30</sup> For further development of this subject, see A. Grégoire, *Immanence et Transcendance* (Brussels: Édition universelle, 1939).

Here we are at one with M. Brunschvicg, but not wholly. For him, *that exists* is a "judgment of externality." For us the mere insertion of the data of experience into a space-time frame is not sufficient to constitute the object as object: spatial opposition is not the conscious opposition of subject and object. The judgment *that exists* establishes a relation between the data of experience, *that*, and the absolute Unity of thought and absolute End of the thinking subject. *Exists* expresses the subject's reaction to the matter of cognition. Now, the subject reacts to data, not in a *receptive* manner alone, but also actively — by spontaneous, immanent acts which pertain to the appetitive order and the will. In other words, the result of reaction is that we know an *object*, a *something*, a *being*. Now a being (*un être*) is anything which is opposed in any way to the subjective self, either as the actual or eventual content of my speculative capacity, or as the actual or possible term of some act of mine.

This reaction of the subject must be *entire*. To become an object the phenomenon must become related to the oneness of the ego, to that homogeneous unity which affects similarly all the representations which come into clear consciousness. It is patent that this condition of unity would be absent if the subject did not react *totally* to the experience-datum.

### Reference to Unlimited Being

Since the reaction is entire it necessarily bears upon the absolute unity of thought and the ultimate end of the subject. Thus, let us take the case where certain experimental data have been assimilated and objectified (and are neither the object adequately corresponding to the objective capacity of the intellect, nor the absolute end of the subject). The same act will simultaneously and indivisibly bear upon the experience-data and the objective capacity of the intellect; it cannot but refer them to each other.

Now the judgment has two aspects, a speculative one and a practical one. It is under the speculative aspect that it expresses the relation of the data of experience to the objective capacity of the intellect. This capacity is *absolutely unlimited*. Consciousness itself is witness that the only limit to our power of affirmation is logical contradiction. Moreover, particular objects appear to us as limited, and it is by this very fact that the intellect can transcend them. Consciousness of the limitation of our knowledge of something postulates the possibility of further knowledge. The only object that can adequately correspond to such an objective capacity is *absolutely unlimited Being*. Hence the judgment bearing upon experimental data links it up with the absolutely unlimited Being, the adequate object of the intellect.

This unlimited Being is not identified with the sum nor with the net resultant of finite objects. For, if the adequate object of the intellect were the sum of particular objects, then intellection would consist simply in summing up these

objects. But this is not the case; we conceive "grades of being." We conceive one being as more perfect than another. Now, a being that is more perfect than another is not just this other being plus something. Nor is the absolute unity of being a universal unity; otherwise we should have to say that the intellect has as many adequate objects as there are objects in which this universal is multiplied.

Therefore, the objective unity of being communicated to objects in the act of apperception is not parceled out. It is communicated indivisibly according to the totality of its proper form. However, it is not communicated like a universal and hence, since it communicates itself indivisibly, it does so by intensive diminutions. Of itself it is unlimited; consequently, when communicating itself, it does not suffer any change or diminution. It remains absolute unity, distinct in itself from the totality of its finite participations. In a word, it is transcendent unity.

Two characteristics, therefore, distinguish the absolute unity of being: its formal *immanence*, which constitutes objects, and its perfect *transcendence* of objects. These two characteristics define *participation*.

### Conclusions: Sufficient Reason Again

Hence, let us draw a few conclusions. By its activity the intellect tends toward the unlimited Being, while assimilating certain data which thus become objects of cognition. How is this necessary mode of activity manifested to consciousness? By the demand for some object, other than immediate objects, which is itself perfectly intelligible and is the complement of intelligibility for all other objects. Now, that which we call a *cause* or sufficient reason<sup>31</sup> is nothing more than such a complement of intelligibility.

This, then, is our first conclusion: *the question of the cause or sufficient reason of the universe necessarily presents itself to the intellect*. Moreover, the only reason it arises is because it is implicitly resolved in every intellectual act; relation to the unlimited Being is not something superadded to objects already constituted. It is an intrinsic or constituent element of the object as such. Consequently, an analogical knowledge of the absolute Being as the superior and ineffable term of this relation implicitly enters into our immediate consciousness of every object inasmuch as it is an object. Now, necessary dependence on the necessary object of thought is the supreme speculative guarantee which is demanded by critical philosophies.<sup>32</sup>

Hence, the affirmation of the transcendent Being rises from logical necessity.

We shall end our analysis here. What we have said suffices, we believe, to establish the foundations of realism. To deduce the conclusions that follow from this initial stand would be to erect a complete metaphysical structure. This was not our intention. Let us, however, remark in conclusion that appealing to a transcendent cause of the universe does not in any way do away with the necessity of scientific research, nor does it put the slightest restriction on intellectual freedom in the domain of science.

<sup>31</sup> Concerning sufficient reason, see the conclusion of the previous article, cited in the first note, p. 21, above.

<sup>32</sup> J. Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique*, Cahier V.

## Book Reviews

### COSMOLOGIA

Gerard Esser, S. V. D.

*Mission Press, S. V. D., Techny, Ill., 1939, pp. xix + 357*

Here is a Latin text in cosmology suitable for seminaries of any caliber. Should it be too lengthy and detailed for the number of hours usually accorded the subject, the professor can be depended on to make a proper selection of topics. The printing is almost flawless; the bibliography and index are adequate. The references are quite ample for a modernized course, though the reader would be more pleased had the authors of periodical articles been regularly given.

Father Esser, besides his well-known competence in other fields, shows himself familiar with the literature of this subject. Writers, it is true, have differed as to what is the exact subject-matter of cosmology. Here we have it set down as *corpora inanimata* (p. 3). This takes in vegetative organisms but leaves out animals as being "psychic." But surely, if cosmology is the metaphysics of the material world, it were better to take in *all* natural bodies in respect to those principles that are common to them all.

The short space of this review might be taken up entirely with praise, but in that line the book will speak for itself. Students will want rather to know where they may encounter the always expected *aporiae*. I shall list some that caught my attention. To say that the parts of the continuum "*solum quantitate a toto differunt*" (p. 15) is to make no distinction between extension and size: it were better to say *magnitudine*. To concede that bodies may have more than three dimensions (p. 27) is to confuse two meanings of dimension. To define space as a relation is hazardous, as Leibniz discovered; space is a field or ground for relations, not a relation itself. The necessity of physical laws is usually understood to lie between the antecedent and the consequent event, not "*inter rem et vires*" (p. 180). The problem of infinite number (p. 276) should make *actu* mean existing (therefore not the possibles), and should be reduced to the final question: Can such an existing multitude be augmented *illimitably*? Few will follow the author in conceding that an individual organism may be *de facto* discontinuous (pp. 37-8; cf. nn. 21, 279); and though systematic species (p. 135), allowing many individuals in each atom, may be a fact in the organic world, chemical changes cannot then be used as a proof of matter and form (p. 221). It is precarious, too, to list mass as quantity (p. 49) instead of quality, and to regard light as literally a mechanical wave (p. 64). Single quanta do not differ in energy-content (pp. 111, 139) but only in wave-length. But these are only slight blemishes on a very thorough piece of work.

Father Esser shows genuine philosophical acumen in recognizing more than one valid approach to his theses, whether strictly Thomistic or otherwise, and he preserves a gentlemanly silence about his preferences for one or other *point d'appui*. Yet he does not always seem to be aware of overstatements, as when he cites extension and activity as "contradictory" (p. 225). He has a surer touch in analyzing De Raemaeker's proof (p. 226), where he reduces it to principles that are Scotistic rather than Thomistic.

JAMES A. McWILLIAMS.

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### CHRISTIANITY AND PHILOSOPHY

Etienne Gilson

Translated by Ralph McDonald, C. S. B.

*Sheed and Ward, New York, 1939, pp. xxvi + 134, \$2.00*

The controversy concerning the possibility, nature and reality of a Christian Philosophy was concluded a few years ago in an armed truce. Once again Professor Gilson returns to the subject, not in a spirit of controversy, but to present his solution of the problem from a new view point. "Having tried elsewhere to establish the reality of a Christian philosophy as an historically knowable fact, I am attempt-

ing here to discover, within the very essence of the Catholic faith, the roots of its theoretical possibility, or in other words, to establish that the notion of a Christian philosophy appears as consistent from the point of view of the Catholic truth taken in its entirety, and from no other one" (p. viii).

The question of a Christian philosophy cannot be isolated from other problems intimately connected with it. Especially is this true in the endeavor to refute the double opposition of Rationalism and the Protestantism of Luther and Calvin. Against the Rationalists he maintains the necessity of faith, and against Luther and Calvin he defends the Augustinian "eulogy of fallen nature." The refutation of these two adversaries must be consistent. It is not a question of compromise, but of a coherent explanation of the nature of human reason, the effects of original sin on the intellect of man, the necessity of revelation, the interrelation between grace and nature, and between faith and reason. Professor Gilson maintains that the only coherent and convincing solution of these intimately connected problems is that "Christian philosophy is a philosophy, which though formally distinguishing the two orders, considers Christian Revelation to be an indispensable guide to truth" (p. 101). Then and only then does philosophy become for the Christian what it must be—the search for wisdom. Against his critics who maintain that philosophy and theology, faith and reason, must not only be formally distinguished, but actually separated with only an extrinsic relation between the two, Professor Gilson appeals to the *magna carta* of Neo-Scholasticism, the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* of Leo XIII. Herein he finds authoritatively stated that for which he has always contended. The separation of philosophy and theology succeeds neither in theory, nor in practice, nor as an apologetic tactic.

To those who are convinced that an armed truce was not the proper conclusion to the controversy of a few years ago, this new study of the problem will be welcome. It is a pleasure to see Professor Gilson place the problem in its proper setting. It is not merely an historical question, nor merely a matter of theoretical definitions of terms, but it is a question of men in an actually existing order where grace and nature, original sin and fallen nature, revelation and faith, which permeate the very intellect of man, must be taken into consideration. Some readers may be surprised at the forcefulness and vehemence of Professor Gilson in the last two chapters of the book, but, as he says himself, his own personal experience and the authority of the *Aeterni Patris* have convinced him of the truth of his position in a matter of importance to modern Catholicism.

WILLIAM L. WADE.

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### THE PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNISM

Charles J. McFadden, O. S. A., Ph. D.

*Benziger Brothers, New York, 1939, pp. xx + 345, \$3.50*

This review could very easily evolve into a mere sales talk. In fact, we feel strongly tempted to borrow a few superlatives from the publisher's blurb, and let it go at that. But whether or not this is the "best treatment of the philosophy of Communism in any language," it surely is the book for which many of us have been waiting. It is a book which the layman can read. It will help him to do some deep thinking painlessly. It may also serve as a model for philosophers who wish to express their deep thoughts in clear every-day language.

Dr. McFadden divides his book into two fairly balanced parts. The somewhat longer first part is devoted to an exposition of Communist doctrine as formulated by Marx and Engels, and consistently maintained by their orthodox disciples. This is, we think, by far the better part of the book. It is the part that will be most avidly read by practical men who are in close contact with the Marxist revolution and who are trying to understand the principles behind it. Nor will

the scholar be less interested who has gathered his store of principles and is eager to make a worthwhile application of them. The second part, very much *secundum mentem divi Thomae*, is a "criticism of the philosophy of Communism." This could be published as a separate volume. And it would be a grand thing if the Marxist, whose attention and good will have been won by the author's able exposition of Marxist thought, would linger long enough over the criticism to realize how full of holes, how irrational and anti-rational the system is.

The author's rather obvious schematic arrangement will be helpful to the reader in a hurry. In both the exposition and the criticism sections, we have what amounts to a series of pamphlets on seven topics: the Communist philosophy of nature, of mind, of history, of the state, of religion, of morality, of revolution, and of society. If the reviewer were to make an arbitrary choice, his preference would go to "the philosophy of nature," with its masterly analysis of Hegelian Dialectic and the effort to Marx to "turn it upside down." With this grandiose fallacy understood, it is easy to grasp the materialist interpretation of history which, if not the most deadly variety of Marxist poison, is probably the most widespread. We venture the opinion that the specifically Marxian brand of materialism has tainted more unconscious victims through bad history than through any other literary genre. But there is something for everybody in Dr. McFadden's adequate diagnosis of complete Marxism.

One may, of course, question the Communist claim to possess a philosophy. No doubt, Karl Marx did a lot of philosophizing, which suggests the distinction between rationalizing and reasoning. But if the philosopher is the man in quest of ultimate reality Marx himself, or Lenin, would not even care to qualify for the dignity. He built his system to influence action. And here precisely lies the reason for taking him seriously. His autodynamic matter, evolving by a sort of creative negation into qualitatively new and more perfect forms, may be absurd. His works may be full of unwarranted assumptions and of words that are empty of real content. His new materialism may look very much like its long line of ancestors. The natural science on which he relied may be turning against him. He may expose himself as an easy mark for the *argumentum ad hominem*. But to ignore him is to betray one's own ignorance. And to refute him it is necessary to know him. Dr. McFadden's book is the result of four years of study. It deserves more attention than most other works in the field.

RAYMOND CORRIGAN.

## IDEALISM VERSUS REALISM

A Symposium

*The Sophist*, Fordham University Press, New York, 1939, pp. 45

Last February a symposium outlining the historical development of the Critical Problem was presented at Fordham University by eight students of philosophy. These informal addresses, together with the remarks of the chairman which maintain their continuity, are now presented in Fordham's yearly journal, *The Sophist*.

In successive essays the divergent views of Locke, Berkeley, Kant, Hegel, and the Modern Realists are fairly set down without attempt at refutation. The Symposium is then concluded by an exposition of the Scholastic position of moderate realism, showing the reasonableness of Aristotle's *via media* between the conflicting systems. In the opinion of the reviewer, the value of the symposium as a simple compendium of the problem would have been increased, had the Scholastic doctrine received more thorough treatment.

While their analysis of the various theories is necessarily oversimplified, the essays show a clear grasp of the problem and are written with a freshness of style and simplicity of terminology which will be welcomed by student readers. Perhaps the most important feature of the Symposium is its demonstration of a successful pedagogical approach to philosophical questions. Professor Cronin, director of the work, deserves congratulations for the enthusiasm and competency with which his students dealt with this difficult problem.

RICHARD H. GREEN.

## PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGY

Francis L. Harmon, Ph. D.

*Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1938, pp. xiv + 609*

Insistence upon an integration between the philosophical and experimental aspects of psychology is the keynote of this addition to the "Science and Culture Series" of texts. A thought-provoking preface by the General Editor emphasizes its timely publication, and expresses the belief that it will aid in counteracting the prevalent mechanistic and materialistic trends in this field.

While the book is written expressly as an experimental psychology text, the author presents each topic in its proper philosophical setting and devotes the final chapter to a consideration of the ultimate nature of man. This he does deftly, without intruding long discussions of a theoretical nature, and without prejudice to the empirical facts.

Professor Harmon defines psychology as the scientific study of human nature, and lives up to this definition throughout the book. He never allows the reader to forget that the entire psychophysical organism must be taken into account when dealing with isolated mental activities. While presenting a unified picture of the matter under discussion, in the summary at the end of each chapter, he often repeats this warning. No conclusions are drawn which are not in harmony with the scientific facts thus far uncovered.

The author cannot be charged with lack of completeness in his work. His treatment of the nervous system is too exhaustive for an introductory course in general psychology. However, the teacher may easily choose what he wishes from the abundant material at hand. Students will find this book helpful in integrating their knowledge of experimental and rational psychology. FRANCIS T. SEVERIN.

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## WHICH WAY, DEMOCRACY?

Wilfrid Parsons, S. J.

*The Macmillan Company, New York, 1939, pp. vii + 295, \$2.00*

The crumbling of democratic institutions before assaults from without and disintegration from within has been an outstanding phenomenon of our era. This collapse has formed the central theme of a battalion of books and articles during the past decade. Every reader of the daily press is aware that democracy has almost ceased to exist in Europe and is rapidly disappearing in the Americas.

In this timely study Father Parsons does vastly more than merely reecho the oft-sounded tocsin to rouse us to a vivid realization of the present crisis. Democracy in this country stands at the crossroads. He envisions three possible avenues along which it may proceed. It may cling to Liberalism, with which unfortunately it has been too long allied: in this case it is doomed. Or it may abandon its tradition of political liberty and drift down the slope which leads to Communism or, as the author considers a more likely course owing to recent developments, to Fascism. Finally, "it may still continue on the path of free institutions and work out a new economy more compatible with human nature than the old individualism."

With unerring accuracy Father Parsons points out the chief weaknesses in our democratic system and exposes the grotesquely erroneous philosophy which permeates it. American democracy must purge itself of Liberalism with its inhuman economics and vicious morals. But in doing this, the author warns, we must guard against the temptation to hand over our political liberty to gain economic security. This is the fate which has befallen many European nations.

Two things must be done to safeguard and rehabilitate our democracy. "We must bring our people back to the recognition of the principles that stem from the ancient tradition of human rights; and must actually take hold of our democratic system, thus revived according to its former meaning, and give it the power to fulfill the functions for which it was adopted." The first of these consists essentially in accepting as the basis of government man's spiritual nature which is the source of his rights and the foundation of authority. The second, Father Parsons believes, can be secured by establishing a corporate system of industry and he advances some cogent arguments to show that such a system is better fitted to operate successfully under a democracy than under a dictatorship.

CLARENCE J. RYAN.

## HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

Willis Dwight Nutting

*Sheed and Ward, New York, 1939, pp. vii + 175, \$1.75*

The modern attack on the supernatural comes from three allied forces, the philosophical, the scientific, and the historical. The philosopher would prove that the supernatural cannot be known; the scientist would show that the supernatural can find no place in his omnipotent natural order; the historian would use "Higher Criticism" to demonstrate that the right interpretation of the Scriptures will remove all supernaturalness from the Christian tradition. And to the unsuspecting ordinary man their arguments may sound plausible enough.

The author invites us to investigate the principles upon which these arguments are founded. In clear and easily understood language he brings to light their shaky Cartesian foundations. As Mr. Nutting would have it, they all make use of these three principles: (1) everything that can possibly be doubted must be rejected as false; (2) only that can be accepted as true which can be proved with mathematical certainty; (3) the primary and fundamental certainty is that of consciousness, which must be the starting point in any quest for truth. Consequently, it is easy to see how the supernatural, substance, and whatever you will, can be discarded. As a result the philosopher, if consistent, will have to be content with a paltry set of "absolutely certain" truths, the scientist with mere quantity, and the historian with reconstructed probabilities. And yet these modern "thinkers" persist in believing many of the things they reject.

The writer's well-put refutations, in homely terms, make it evident that the philosopher has overstepped his bounds in decreeing his stringent standard for truth; that the scientist, as scientist, method and all, is not competent to judge on the supernaturalness of miracles in particular; and that the historian is violating one of the fundamental canons of historical criticism by substituting his subjective assumptions for reliable testimony.

Such a book is well worth the perusal of the ordinary thoughtful Christian. It is cogent and readable, though, at times, there seem to be some unnecessary repetitions and occasional doubtful interpretations.

MARTIN F. HASTING.

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## JESUIT THINKERS OF THE RENAISSANCE

Edited by Gerard Smith, S. J., Ph. D.

*Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, 1939, pp. xvii + 254, \$3.00*

This volume comes to us with the announcement that it is a collection of essays presented to John F. McCormick by his students on the occasion of the sixty-fifth anniversary of his birth. It contains: (1) *Suarez and the Organization of Learning*, by Clare C. Riedl, A. M.; (2) *Father Dominic Bouhours and Neo-Classical Criticism*, by Victor M. Hamm, Ph. D.; (3) *Molina and Human Liberty*, by Anton C. Pegis, Ph. D.; (4) *Leonard Lessius*, by Cecil H. Chamberlain, S. J., A. M.; (5) *Juan de Mariana*, by G. Kasten Tallmadge, A. M., M. D., Ph. D.; (6) *Bellarmino and the Dignity of Man*, by John C. Riedl, Ph. D.

The book has a fourfold interest for us. We are interested in the man who deservedly receives this fine tribute of honor, of gratitude, and of affection. We are interested in the Editor, who is obviously the inspirer, the organizer, and the director of the whole enterprise. We are interested in the six contributors to the volume. And we are interested in the six eminent thinkers who are the subjects of the essays.

Many readers will not know Father McCormick as Gerard Smith knew him—from long and intimate association. His enthusiastic recital of the qualities in Father McCormick which show him so eminently worthy of the honor given him is entirely justified.

The reader would also like to know who conceived the idea of this tribute, given on the sixty-fifth birthday of Father McCormick. The reviewer has no hesitation in saying that Father Gerard Smith was the conceiver, the originator, organizer, and the director of this

laudable undertaking. No one has a better knowledge of Father McCormick and his disciples. No one has a livelier zeal to promote the study of true philosophy among the laity of both sexes.

It would be gratifying to the reader to have a more intimate and detailed knowledge of the six individuals whose essays are here published. As it is we have to content ourselves with such revelation of their personalities and abilities, both literary and philosophical, as may be gleaned from their published writings.

The six Jesuits chosen as subjects of these essays are indeed eminent thinkers of the Renaissance; but not of that Renaissance which was the revival of pagan antiquity with its many accompanying evils. Not one of these six can be considered as an originator, a cooperator in, or a product of that Renaissance. They did, however, belong to the renaissance of the Scholastic philosophy of the thirteenth century, which the revival of pagan antiquity had done so much to obscure, suppress, and banish from the minds of men.

The essayists deserve our thanks and congratulations for the good beginning they have made in acquiring and spreading a knowledge of these Jesuit thinkers. To me, a long time teacher of Scholastic philosophy, these thinkers are revered friends and guides. In reading these essays I felt as if each one of these grand old friends was paying me a personal visit—for which I thank the makers of this book.

MICHAEL I. STRITCH.

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## VISUAL OUTLINE OF PHILOSOPHY

J. W. Bentley

*Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1939, pp. iv + 158, \$0.75*

An accurate visual outline of philosophy would be a useful thing for student and teacher alike, but unfortunately it appears that in this particular attempt at such an outline Dr. Bentley has received his information, especially that concerning Scholasticism, from secondary and vitiated sources. We do not read far before we find the statement: "Christianity would have been impossible had Stoicism not overcome national and social barriers" (p. 24). This bold prophecy is somewhat disconcerting to those of us who hold that the futurables (what would have been) are known only to God, and who find it no easy task to prove that they are known even to Him. St. Augustine would probably be mildly surprised to find that in himself "Catholic ideals and later Protestant convictions meet" (p. 31). He might ask Dr. Bentley to list a few of these Protestant convictions, so that he could see more explicitly just where the agreement lies.

The eyebrows of the Scholastic reader of the outline are raised in puzzled surprise to find that according to St. Thomas "philosophy could not demonstrate the existence of a Deity had not the Deity first revealed himself to man through the Incarnation and the Trinity" (p. 41). Had Dr. Bentley glanced over only the first article of the first question of the first part of the *Summa Theologica*, he would have found that "it was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, besides philosophical science built up by human reason. . . because the truth about God, such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors." To say that philosophy could not demonstrate the existence of the Deity without previous revelation is quite different from saying that revelation was necessary "in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely." A few moments more of patient reading would have brought Dr. Bentley to the second article of the second question of the first part of the *Summa*, where he would find St. Thomas saying, in reply to the first objection, that "the existence of God and other like truths about God, which can be known by natural reason, are not articles of faith, but are preambles to the articles; for faith presupposes natural knowledge. . ."

The outline, of course, is not entirely a series of inaccuracies, but the number of false statements is such that the book is untrustworthy and would be quite misleading in the hands of a student who did not know his matter thoroughly before using it. We can praise the author's attempt, but we must deplore its outcome.

J. W. NAUGHTON.